The art of Kathakali

A.C. Pandeya

Kitabistan

Kathakali literally meaning "story-dance" is the pantomimic dance-drama of Malabar comparable to a great extent with the European ballet in the West with an additional advantage of having rich gestural code necessary to convey the theatrical pleasures to the spectator.

This book is a detailed analysis of the dance and art of Kathakali, its origin, technique, the costume, make-up and the gestural code, with a separate chapter on "Evolution of Kerala's Art" by Krishna Chaitanya.

This edition has been completely revised, and enlarged and contains new set of illustrations to further facilitate understanding and appreciation of the Art.

OPINIONS ABOUT FIRST EDITION

"Here is a book which, while fully authoritative, is yet written in style simple enough for the lay reader who will be able to enjoy a Kathakali performance better after reading it. It is equally good as a text-book for a beginner learning the Kathakali style of dancing. . . . The illustrations add considerably to the clarity of the text."

—*Illustrated Weekly of India.*

"The book is extremely delightful reading. . . . The chapters in which the author discusses the technique of Kathakali, and the two chapters on Mudras are really very good."

—*The Visva Bharati.*

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THE ART OF KATHAKALI

The art of kathakali

By
GAYANACHARYA AVINASH C. PANDEYA

With a Foreword by
GURU GOPI NATH

Introduction by
HIS HIGHNESS MAHARANA SHREE VIJAYADEVJI RANA
MAHARAJA SAHEB OF DHARAMPUR (SURAT)

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TO
MY MOTHER

FOREWORD

In making a critical study of the art and dance of Kathakaḷi, the ancient dance-drama of Kéraḷa, Gāyanāchārya Avināsh C. Pāṅdéya has produced this comprehensive book of an unparalleled nature. I feel no less pleasure than great honour that I am invited to express a few words on it.

So far none has dealt with this subject in any language so elaborately and so systematically as this young authority on Indian music and dancing has. He has presented the entire technical subtlety in a lucid style making it to rank as the first book on Kathakaḷi literature, dance and art. Its authenticity as the first today and the first tomorrow shall ever guide all dancers, students, commentators and contemporaries of all ages.

The book deals with the origin of Kathakaḷi, its art and dance, *rasas* and costume and make-up, and gestural code; and makes wide study on the origin of *Mudrās*—their permutation and combination. The interesting chapter on its mime—make-up and costume—vividly reinforces the intricacy and artistical development which this *kala* gained within a short evolutionary period of a little over 200 years.

The writer has taken great pains in tracing out those neglected pieces of this art which were hitherto unknown and unmined. While dealing with hand poses in use in Kathakaḷi, Gāyanāchārya has tabulated the connotation of groups of ideas which each *mudra* represents. It will help considerably all dancers to remember various expressions expressable by them.

Kathakaḷi is "an interpretative dance-drama to the accompaniment of music." The highly specialised form of pantomimic representation makes this art to depict the actual life of our gods and people.

While tracing the origin of Kathakaḷi, the author has made an interesting survey of those human factors which can contribute in the evolution of dance. Guided by regional effects, habit, custom, and tradition, Gāyanāchārya believes that Kathakaḷi has taken its birth to connote "poetry in their (dancers) figures." The wide appeal of sentiments and emotions helps the Kathakaḷi actor to depict an object or a thought in a lively and realistic colour. The author has been successful in giving the basis and importance of the use of various colours in Kathakaḷi make-ups. The unique feature of the book lies in the discussion and analysis of "Kathakaḷi Dance Exercises" and the "*Talas* used in Kathakaḷi". Its practical utility has been enriched and enhanced by these.

The work presents a scholarly exposition of every art of Kathakaḷi and is an invaluable companion with every one interested in matters Kathakaḷi. It is the first authoritative work in my opinion.

GOPI NATH

TRIVANDRUM
February, 1943

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

If an art is true, it reflects the innermost ecstacies of a people in a sympathetic and symbolic but eloquent form. A Kathakaḷi dance-drama is just the manifestation of the life of the people of Kéraḷa. And so it is superb.

In completing the present work, the basic traits of the people of Kéraḷa were studied to reach to the deep roots of Kathakaḷi. The success has been remarkable, for the study revealed, for instance, the reason for the difference between the formation of certain hand poses used in Kathakaḷi and mentioned in Sanskrit texts. In the light of fresh experiences, therefore, most of the chapters have been re-written; a few are added. The most significant chapter is on the literary aspect of Kathakaḷis. Appendices have been rehashed.

The first edition of the book was exhausted within a few months of its publication in 1943. A reprint could not follow: Engrossed in political work, I could hardly find time to revise it. Later, post-partition uncertainties stood in the way. The second edition was deferred in this way to a more favourable time. In the meantime, I received repeated requests from the Publishers and numerous readers for a fresh edition. I trust the readers would now no longer feel a vacuum in the literature on this spectacular dance form of India.

Reviewers of the first edition have been kind; and, for their information, I may briefly make a few observations. The art, theory and philosophy of Indian dance are intimately woven round Lord Śiva—also known as Natarāj. Whether it is *Bharat Nātyam, Kathakaḷi, Maṇipurī* or *Bharat Nṛitya* (miscalled *Kathak*), homage to Śiva is common and universal. Lord Kṛśṇa figures as the symbol of worship, but He too was Śiva's disciple, learning the dance erotic at his feet. Śiva, whose philosophy is the very existence of man, cannot be dissociated from any art form. The present work is the presentation of every art of Kathakaḷi.

A reference to the principles enunciated in the *Bharat Nātya Śāstra* (as distinct from *Bharat Nātyam*) has been necessary. *Bharat Nātya Śāstra* is an authoritative and parental treatise on the laws and rules of Indian dancing. *Bharat Nātyam* and *Kathakaḷi* are two different arts, but the *Śāstra* is the basic code on which the art in both the forms of dancing has been developed.

A book on art has its own limitations. The function and object of literature is only to furnish information and not to train one to perfection. Art to a gifted person is spontaneous. To others the need of a teacher is essential. Even to the gifted one, guidance is necessary.

This book, as is acclaimed by all critics, is full of essential information on the Kathakaḷi dance-drama. A close study of Kathakaḷi performances will, however, enrich one's knowledge.

I am thankful to many friends for the assistance they have rendered in completing the revision. In particular, my gratitudes are due to the help of Gurū Gōpi Nāth, who has now started a dance school at Madras; to Sri K. K. Nair (Krishna Chaitanya), Information Officer, Press Information Bureau, Government of India, for writing the concluding chapter, summing up the book and reflecting on the growth, aesthetics and the artistic and literary nuances of Kathakaḷi and for loaning his colour transparencies; and to Sri R. P. Dhamija, Feature Writer, Press Information Bureau, Government of India, for lending several colour transparencies and black and white stills. Shri J. K. Gupta kindly helped me in preparing the typescript.

NEW DELHI
April, 1960

A. C. PANDEYA

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

It has always been difficult for man to realise that his life is all art. Man is the measure of all things, of those which exist, and of those which have no existence. It is here that man visualises the Infinite in the process of the self-expression through the Beauty of Nature—the Aesthetic Emotion. He, thus, develops a nature and makes it dance in an ecstatic gait to exhibit the Spiritual Life in the Physical manifestation of the Life Eternal.

Love is reality as experienced by the lover, truth is reality as the philosopher experiences, and so is beauty "reality" through the artiste's angle of vision : and are not these the three phases of the Absolute ? The Indian philosopher firmly believes that the absolute Beauty (*rasa*, aesthetic emotion and sentiment) exists in the same manner as the votary conceives the existence of the absolute goddess and the absolute Truth. These feelings of Love, Truth and Beauty inflame the heart of man; he makes gestures, pantomimic in their form but powerful in their expression of thought. It is the "dance" —the dance of life—the eternal dance—the dance that leads life to worship God to attain salvation.

The *Uṇmai Vilākkam*, vs. 32-37-39, mention:

> "The Supreme Intelligence dances in the soul. . .for the purpose of removing our sins. By these means, our Father scatters the darkness of illusion (*māyā*), burns the thread of causality (*karma*), stamps down evil (*mala, anava, avidyā*), showers Grace, and lovingly plunges the Soul in the Ocean of Bliss (*ānand*). They never see rebirths, who behold this mystic dance."

The cosmic dance of Śiva is the manifestation of man's Rhythmic Life—"of His Rhythmic Play as the Source of all Movement within the Cosmos"—which is released of all Illusions. This Life is the Centre of Universe, i.e., God within the heart.

Kathakaḷi makes a marvellous survey of the Absolute through the physical manifestation of aesthetics. It is an art of feeling expressed through emotions, gestures and *mudrās* (hand poses). It is here that this art excels all other dance arts in India, except the *Bharat Nātyam* to which it owes its existence.

The revival of dancing in India during recent years, though began in a much sophisticated manner, was due to some professionals who were struggling for their existence. Frequent visits of Western dancers, like Ragini, La Marie, Anna Pavalova, etc., induced young educated Indian men and women, who had an innate desire or instinct to learn this art, to exploit the dormant culture of their nation and to awaken their latent faculties for the ultimate promotion of their well-being. Uday Shankar, Ram Gopal, Natraj Vashi, Rukmini and Sadhana Bose are among the brilliant exponents of the ancient schools of dancing. Gōpī Nāth, the Palace Dancer of Travancore, is the "real" scholar of the art of Kathakaḷi, the mimetic dance of Maḷabār. It is the genius of Uday Shankar that he has introduced originality in his dances : Mahākavi Vaḷḷathōl equally stands in originality in Kathakaḷi.

The present work is the first attempt in English to elucidate the subtleties of the Kathakaḷi dance-drama. So far none has made a comprehensive survey of its various aspects. All the available material on this subject is insufficient to give an authoritative interpretation of its elaborate technique. One has to go deep in the art of the actor while staging some play.

The growth of this dance-drama, with a full investigation o the historical background of its evolution and also of the development in the formation and usage of hand poses, has been discussed at length. The costume and make-up have a different adaptation at different occasions. Special attention has been given to the make-up of characters, because Kathakaḷi especially draws its magnificence from it. Aesthetic emotions and sentiments, as an essential accessory of the dance, have been fully discussed. Other useful information, like the Kathakaḷi stage, musical instiuments, etc., are given in Appendices.

The material for this work has been drawn mostly from palm-leaf manuscripts kept in His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore

Palace Library, Department of Archaeology (Travancore) publications and other contemporary writings. My own experience in this art has polished the entire theme.

In preparing this book I am benefited considerably by several persons to whom I am highly indebted. In particular, my revered friend, Mr. R. V. Poduval, B. A., Director of Archaeology (Travancore), helped me a lot by lending me some of his departmental manuscripts and publications. My Personal Assistant, Mr. Abdul Rahman Ghaznavi, laboured much in collecting material for this work, and I am beholden to him for this. I am obliged to my teacher, Dr. D. Pant, B. Com., Ph.D. (T. C. D.) of the University of Lucknow, for reading the original manuscript. I am thankful to my younger brothers, Dr. Santosh Chandra Pandeya and Dr. Satish Chandra Pandeya, for sketching the illustrations appearing in this book. My thanks are also due to Mr. Uday Shankar whose sketch of the "Rhythm of Life" is included in the chapter on the "Kathakaḷi Dance Exercises". I acknowledge the courtesy of Rajkumar Shree Prabhatdevji Rana of Dharampur and Mr. Rajendra Shankar in offering me, directly and indirectly, their invaluable assistance. Mr. A. S. Bhatnagar kindly helped me in preparing the Index.

I am grateful to Sri Gopi Nath, Palace Dancer, Travancore, for his kind Foreword to the book. As the greatest artiste of the time, he will ever behold the cause of Kathakaḷi.

I must express my heartfelt gratitude and indebtedness to our illustrious Maharaja, His Highness Maharana Shree Vijayadevji Rana, Maharaja Saheb of Dharampur, who has graciously given an Introduction to this book. Doubtless, as a great exponent and critic of art he is, he shall live for all times.

A. C. PANDEYA

MUTTRA
March, 1943

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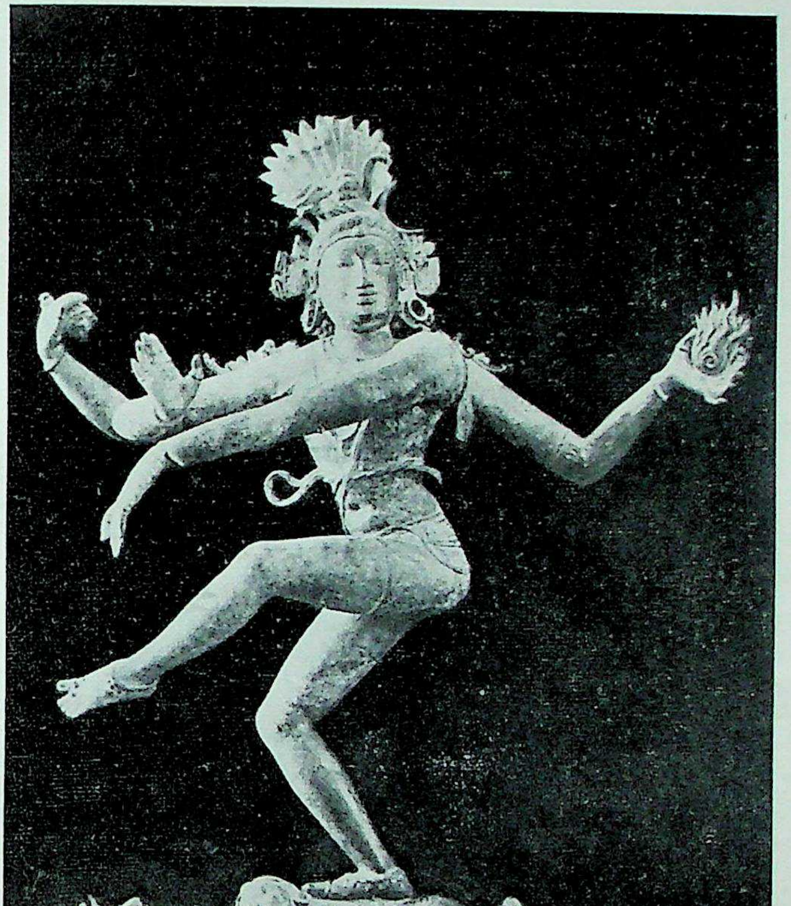

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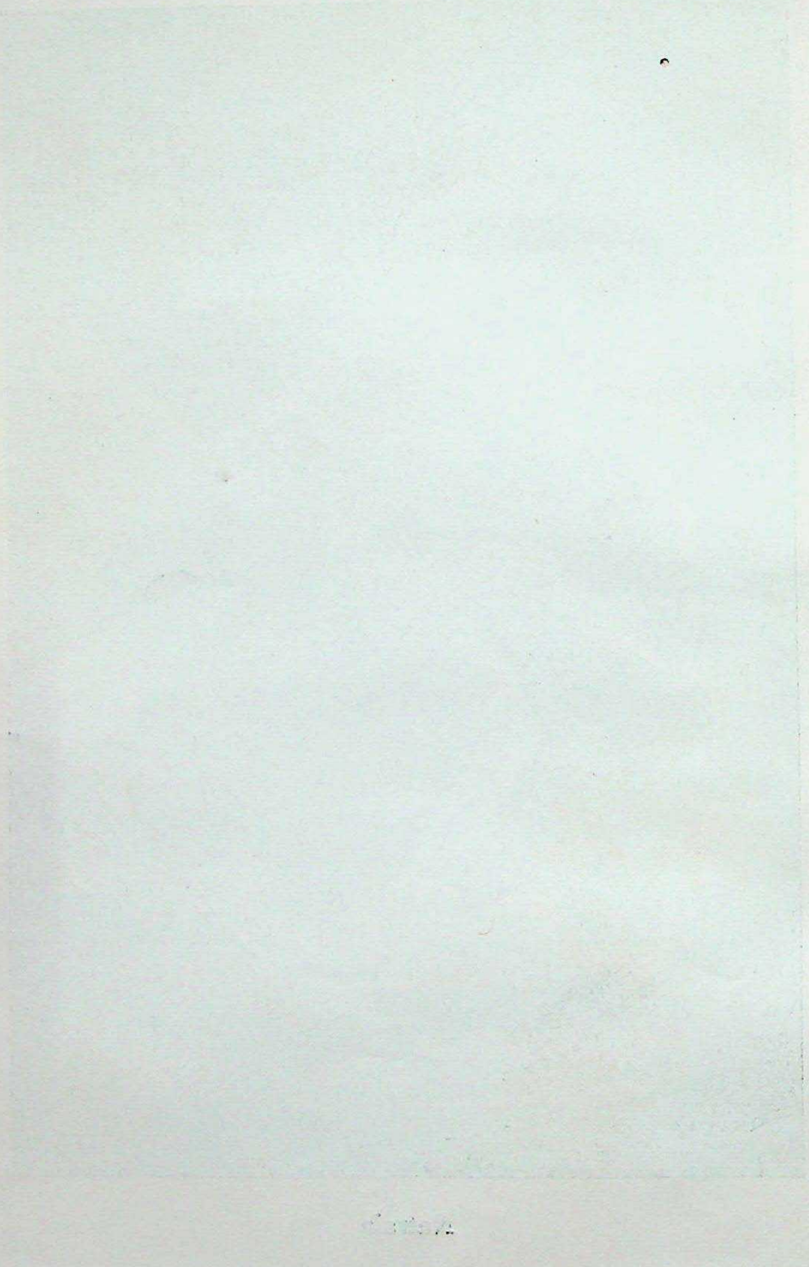

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INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE ART OF DANCING

LIFE in itself is a composition of arts, peculiar to its own measures.

There is in every living creature an instinct to make one or the other movement of the body which a dancer calls "gesture". Gesticulating, he recalls to memory the sacred life of the great Hindu *avatārs* (incarnations) and the people. To him, dancing lies at the root of all processes towards *bhakti* (worship and devotion) and attainment of salvation. He visualises creation of the universe as a result of the ecstatic dance of Brahma, the Creator. He ascribes every *kṛiya* (action) of God to a creative dance in which man forms the minutest dancing atom. Every human action, as that of an animal, has a direct command of the soul and that action is termed *dainik nṛtya* (every-day dance). The existence of the supreme power of the abstract life, or, of God, in every *kṛiya* of the living being in a latent form helps in developing the various dynamic forces of the human nature, and the awakening of these forces leads man to "*dance*".

Nṛtya is the outcome of five *kṛiyas* of God, viz., *sṛṣti*, or, *Āvirbhāva* (Universe or creation), *Isthiti* (Preservation or Protection), *Saṁhāra* (Destruction), *Tirōbhava* (Veiling, Embodiment, Illusion or Giving Rest) and *Anūgraha* (Release or Salvation). These subjective and objective actions, in turn, are the different forms of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rūdra, Mahéśvara and Sadāsiva. "In the night of Brahmā, Nature is inert, and cannot dance till Śiva wills it; He rises from His rapture and dancing sends through matter pulsing waves of awakening sound, and lo ! matter also dances appearing as a glory round about Him."[1]

Śiva, the greatest of all our deities, is depicted in the cosmic pose of a dancer who perpetually stands for an image of reality and truth, the keys to the complex and complicated tissues of human life and lives in general, which form an independent theory of Nature, not simply satisfactory and adaptable to a single clique, race, or nation, nor acceptable or worthy of consideration to the philosopher, thinker, and worshipper of one century only, but universal in its appeal to the votary, the worshipper, the mediator, the philosopher, the thinker, the lover, the gametic and the artist of all ages and all countries.

The four significant actions of Lord Śiva connote that the universe is created, protection is granted, release is offered and destruction is undertaken, all at the will of God : The drum stands for creation, fire for destruction, protection proceeds from the hand of hope, the foot held aloft gives release.

Of all the arts, the art of dancing first expresses itself in human person. Music, acting, poetry form a single compartment of human personification, while sculpture, painting and all other arts of design proceed in another stream. There is no primary art beyond these two arts, and their origin is much earlier than man himself—and dancing came first. It may be that earlier to human existence, dancing and architecture were the result of the same impulse. Edmund Selous suggests that the nest of birds is the chief early form of building and the creation of nest may have first arisen out of their ecstatic sexual dance.[2]

All forms of dances have their histrionic background of evolution. Topographic conditions, climate, language, deportment and *mise en scène* of folk dances indigenous to a nation and the physical built of the people are the main guiding conditions for the suggestion of a particular type of dancing. The striking example is of the dance-forms prevalent in the plains of the Indus, the Ganges, and the Brahmaputra rivers, Rajasthan, Tanjore and Kèraḷa. There is considerable difference between the artistic representation of one form of *Bhārat Nṛitya* (miscalled "Kathak") dancing in the Gangetic and the Indus plains and the other in Rajputana; between *Manipurī* dance of Bengal and of Assam; between *Sadir* dance of Tanjore and *Dāssiāttam* of Tamilnad; between *Bhārat Nātyam* and *Kathakaḷi;* between *Garbā*, the folk-dance of Gujerat and *Rāsa Līlā*, the folk-dance of Uttar Pradesh, etc.

Nṛtya, *Gīta* and *Vādhya* are the three essential factors of our *Sangīta*. Dancing (*Nartana*) has three off-shoots, viz., *Nātya*, which essentially represents a theatrical performance; *Nṛtt*, which conveys rhythmic movement of the body without alluding *abhinaya* or *bhāva* and, therefore, largely drawing its art from the footwork; and, *Nṛtya*, meaning rhythmic movement of the body anent some *bhāva* stipulated in a piece of *abhinaya*, thus alluding some story.

The joyous strokes of the feet of children or the rise and fall or the philosophers' thoughts, all are governed by the same law of rhythm. If this law of rhythm, lying at the root of all Indian dancing, is overlooked, one would fail to understand the supreme manifestation of physical life—life not only in the external space of human action, but also in the internal space of self-realisation.

The significance of dancing lies, in its truest form, in a single and an intimate, concrete appeal of a general rhythm—that general rhythm which does not merely mark life, but the universe in its wide sense; and if one is still persistent to consider it a narrow suggestion, it is the sum total of all cosmic influences which reach and affect human life. It need surprise none that rhythm, ever tending to be moulded into a time, should mark all the physical and spiritual manifestations of life.[3]

Dancing is the supreme expression of religion and love alike—of religion from the earliest time of human existence and of love from the age much anterior to the birth of man ! Tracing the history of the origins of dancing in the human person, it is seen intimately entwined with the human behaviour in respect of the tradition of war, labour, entertainment, education, whereas some of the wisest philosophers and the ancient civilisations have considered the dance as "the pattern in accordance with which the moral life of men must be woven."[4]

Hindus believe that to dance is to take part in the cosmic control of the world. Every sacred dionysian dance is regarded as an imitation of the divine action. Lucian remarks in his essay on dancing that "you cannot find a single ancient mystery in which there is no dancing, in fact, most people say of the development of the Mysteries that they dance them out."[5]

The auto-intoxication of rapturous movement brings the devotee for a while at least into that self-forgetful union with the not-self which the mystic ever seeks. The ecstatic Hindu dance in honour of Śiva has come to be a great symbol of "the clearest image of the activity of God which any art or religion can boast of." Pantomimic dances, however, in their effort to heighten natural expression and to imitate natural process, bring the dancers into the divine sphere of creation and enable them to assist vicariously in the energy of the gods. The dance, thus, becomes the presentation of a divine drama, the vital re-enactment of sacred history in which the worshipper is enabled to play a real part.[6]

The art of Kathakaḷi is the art of expressing a story by mere gesticulation which connotes a group of ideas, like a dumb person who uses a gestural code to speak his feelings. The gestures are a combination of actions under different *rasas* (aesthetic moods) and *bhāvas* (the accessory moods of *rasas*).

Bharata's *Nāṭya Sāstra* deals with four kinds of actions (*abhinayas*), viz., first, *Sāttvika* (emotional attributes); second, *Āṅgika* (body gestures); third, *Vācka* (vocal as in singing); and fourth, *Āhārya* (dress and *mise en scène*). He attaches great importance to *Sāttvika abhinaya*.

Of all the various schools of dancing in India, Kathakaḷi embodies the richest gestural code and makes a free use of it in alluding a story. It has 24 single hand poses called *mudrās*, formed by the various permutations of the fingers. Presented in different ways they connote about 500 words. "The gesture may be imitative in its origin or allusive or mantric and in the little flurries of pure dance which punctuate the *padams* a sort of synthesis of gesture is used : the hands are used in *mudrās* but form no gesture with precise meaning. These passages known as *Kalasams* using only a vague stylicised gesture are less remote from European notions of dancing."[7]

Kathakaḷi performances may be divided into "community" and "spectacular". The former is performed by a whole group of actors for their own psycho-physical satisfaction, or, in aid of a good crop, or, as a prayer for bringing rains. "Spectacular" dancing is to be watched and appreciated by the educated audience, although behind it there is the basic notion of "pleasing the gods."

This dance-drama comprises varied movements of the hands and the body. The suppleness and agility of the actor's body magnify each action. The movements of the eyes, eyebrows, lips, cheeks, teeth and such other movable parts help in the formation of a meaningful expression.

Nature has endowed Malabar with an environment which may help develop the art of dancing. It enjoys the *deva danam* (god's gift) to present the highest form of artistic skill in the dance. Young lads of 11 years join a *kalari* (a kind of gymnasium) where their body is massaged and each muscle is relaxed to the extent that it readily responds to a slight bent in the posture. When their body attains agility, suppleness and charm, they are trained in the art of acting and dancing. It takes about six years for a lad to master this dance-drama. Namboodri Pandits are the backbones of this histrionic art.

Kathakaḷi's origin and development owe gratitude to the royal family of Travancore. The Raja of Kottarakkara (17th century) is the earliest exponent of this art. During his time, Kathakaḷi plays were staged continuously for twenty-four hours without any break. Even today, one would be enthralled to witness this dance-drama during some festival in Travancore. This dance is still being developed under the patronage of His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore who is a great art connoisseur.

Kathakaḷi has contributed a memorable, superb art of dancing and acting in the *Nāṭya* literature of India. So long as this art of dancing is living, its high technique would go unchallenged. It draws much authority from Bharata's *Nāṭya Śastra*, though some consider the *Hastalakśaṇa Dīpikā* as the earliest treatise on the subject. Whereas the *mudrās* are the same, to a great extent, in both these works, description about their formation differs. The latter work, however, is believed by many to be confusing and unauthoritative.

In the following pages, Gayanacharya Avinash C. Pandeya, a distinguished authority on Indian music and dancing, has made a scholarly treatment of the art of Kathakaḷi. He has shown a deep study of the subject. His close contact with the scholars on Kathakaḷi, for the last few years, has helped him in presenting this informative work in a fascinating and interesting manner. This book gives a clear insight into the subject it deals with.

VIJAYADEVJI

KATHAKAḶI SṚṢṬI

(*The Genesis of Kathakaḷi*)

These are the land and the people; vocational, social and religious life of the inhabitants, and the evolution of the structure of the community which directly and indirectly influence the growth of literature and arts. These have constituted a distinct creative phase in the comity of "regional nations" in the past and have given rise to a number of art-forms. In South India, thoughts influenced the art-forms through a gradual scientific process of selection and assimilation till the crystallised forms of present-day dance and music were established. Their roots are found deep in antiquity.

CHAPTER I

THE HOME OF KATHAKAḶI

Bharatnatyam or Kathakaḷi !

South India claims two classical dance-forms. If Tāmilnād in the south-east boasts of Bharatanatyam, Malabar in the south-west has offered the country a highly developed histrionic art, Kathakaḷi.

From Cape Comorin to Calicut, at the extreme tip of the Great Indian Peninsula, runs a belt about three hundred miles long and covering an area of roughly 9,100 square miles, along the western coast. It is the home of Kathakaḷi.

Its white sand and bright red soil, luxuriant vegetation, soaring trees and tangled lianas, perpetually green foliage, envying the crowning blue sky, lagoons and waterways—all combine to make this land scenically the most beautiful and richly endowed in the world. It is the "Kashmir of South India."

Malabar, as this part of the country has been traditionally called, is now culturally and politically known as Kèraḷa—a modified form of "Cheraḷa", a nomenclature originally given by the great Cherā Kings, who ruled over a portion of South India along with the Pāṇḍyas and the Imperial Cōḷās.

The land rises out of coral reefs. In the east, backwaters separate it from the Western Ghats and gradually slope down in the west to the flat seaboard of the State. A chain of navigable lagoons, stretching from Ponnani to Trivandrum, are connected by canals. The Arabian Sea lies in its west and the Indian Ocean sweeps its shores in the south. Bright red soil gleams through the mighty coastal hills on the one side and the sand bar on the other. Both the land and the sea smile here agreeably and the rays of the sun dance on the waves of the sea and the suave ripples of lagoon waters.

No doubt, the Nature urges in the people of Malabar a natural instinct—to muse and dance.

Since the dawn of civilisation, Malabar is known for its luxuriant forests in which nearly 600 varieties of timber trees grow. Ironwoods, such as teak, blackwood, ebony, sandalwood and rosewood, are exported as well for use in the construction of ships and railway slippers. A variety of softwoods for making tea-chests, packing cases, paper-pulp, match-boxes and toys are also found.

Masts and beams of ancient ships manufactured in Egypt and Greece used Malabar ironwoods exported from the many ports on the Malabar coast. Cochin was one of the most important outlets. And Mattanchery, Alleppey, Quilon, Cape Comorin too.

Muchiri, near the present Cranganur, the capital of the Chera Kings, is described by an ancient Tamil poet as "a thriving town where beautiful ships of the Yavanas bringing gold come splashing white foam in the waters of the Periyar, which belongs to Kéraḷa, and return laden with pepper." Biblical King Solomon's "ivory, apes and peacocks" came from Malabar about a millennium before the Christian Era.

Since the earliest times, Malabar has thus been the natural gateway to the western world. Also to the eastern. The early Tamil Dravadians, who were matchless navigators and builders of ships, "faultless in construction" with broad beams and strong rudders, as the *Atharva Ved Samhita* records, sailed in either direction invoking the blessings of Aditi—"With Thy Blessings, we embark on this ship."

Indian mercantile marines traversed the vast seas washing the shores of Ptolemaic Egypt, the Hellenic world, Greece and the Arab countries in the west; and of Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, Java, Sumatra in the south-east. Romans under Augustus and Egyptians under Ptolemy Philadelphus built large vessels. Other West Asian nations constructed or purchased smaller junks from them.

In the wake of trade and commerce, foreign travellers and writers poured into India. Phoenecians, Egyptians, Syrians, Jews and Romans—in fact, all adventurous people of the western world who communicated with India during the centuries immediately preceding and following the Christian Era—braved the storms and rode the rough seas in quest of the wealth of India—and they anchored their ships in the ports of Malabar.

In the early centuries before the Christian Era, Roman and Greek writers, like Pliny, Strapo, Arrian and later Greek ambassadors to the Mauryan Empire, entered India through Malabar. So did Megasthenes and the Arab travellers. In the third century, Indian traders, travellers, monks and writers reached China and in turn brought Chinese contemporaries.

The history of the Dutch, the French and the English seafarers is more recent to be thrilling.

Kéraḷa became the axis of eastern and western cultures, the impact of which is reflected in its social structure, art and architecture and dance and music.

Chinese contribution to the Malabari life was significant. They bartered silks for spices, and introduced the new arts of porcelain making, building methods, cloth making and make-up. The architectural concept of the temples of Malabar speak of this impact to a great degree. It has upward tilting roofs and windows of paper secured by wooden slates. The make-up and costume of the *dramatis personae* of the Kéraḷa stage are equally eloquent of the Chinese influence.

Cochin fishermen employ large square fishing nets which are lowered into the sea and channel waters by means of weighted ropes and beams to catch fish. These are still known as "Chinese nets."

The History

Malabar's political history turns the pages of the Vedas, and is shrouded in the mist of antiquity, legends—Puranic and mythological. Its unchronicled past is written in the didactic poems of the ancient Tamil works, in the *Mahabharat* and the *Ramayana*.

Tradition has it that this part of the country was originally submerged under the sea-water. Mythological Parasurāma, the sworn enemy of the Kshatriyas, axed it out of the sea-bed and reclaimed it for the habitation of a new race of Brahmins. He did it in *Dwāpar Yuga.* And he expiated his life's sins.

Who these Brahmins were? Fishermen! Their conversion was a result of this gratuitous boon by Parasurāma, called the spiritual head of the new Brahmins, "Namboodris". These Namboodris became fathers of Kéraḷa's learning, art and culture. They continue to be the repositories of every art, Kathakaḷi, from its earliest history to the present day.

Thus far the myth. Beyond it, the history of the founders of Kéraḷa is to be read in the Tamil epic, *Silappathikaram* which deals with dancing as well.

On the downfall of the Chera Dynasty in the sixth century A.D., Kéraḷa was split up into three independent kingdoms: The first two were Travancore and Cochin, and the third State was of the Zamorin of Calicut, the maker of the history of the histrionic art of Kéraḷa.

Later the Portuguese and the Dutch came, settled and vanished. The beginnings of an era of peace and prosperity ushered in with the advent of the British and the conclusion of the Subsidiary Alliance. After Independence, the two States were finally welded into one indissoluble political, geographical, geological and cultural unit on July 1, 1949. The present State of Kéraḷa was formed after the States Reorganisation Act on October 1, 1956.

Racially, Malabaris are a mixed race, principally of Aryanised Dravidians and foreigners—Greeks, Romans, Arabs and the Western Christians, who from time to time settled in Malabar. For the persecuted Jews this land was haven. African Negroes who came as slaves, sailors or adventurers also settled down here. All these communities of different shades and beliefs are since then living here in complete peace. In the colourful life for Malabar various foreign influences are thus discernible.

After the Dravid, Aryan, Buddhist, Jain and Brahmin impacts came the Christian influence. Several Christian Missionaries visited Malabar and converted many families to Christianity. Saint Thomas the Apostle began his evangelical work and claimed the credit of bringing some of the most distinguished families in the Christian fold. The principal contribution of the early Christian to the Malabari way of life was in dress. The Kathakaḷi actor drew largely of the Christian woman's gown and skirts.

Religiously the myth of Malabar's origin and the varying effect of different beliefs do not matter so much as that cumulative influence on the social structure of the Malabaris and Kéraḷa's art and culture. The Malabari developed a peculiar social custom quite foreign to the orthodox communities in the rest of the country. It was the custom of matriarchy. Though it has now been dissolved by legislation, the position of the Malabari woman still remains strong.

Physically, the Malabari is a beauty. He is active, clean and fond of massage and oil baths. Massage is an important part of his daily life. His glistening brown skin adds charm to his well-cared-for body. The Malabari woman is also keen to caress the glossy sheen of her long luxuriant locks which give a tropical foliage look to her pleasing countenance.

Malabaris clothe themselves sparsely. Women are often than not bare-breasted and without, sometimes, an undergarment. Men's usual wear is the *mundu*, a strip of cloth hanging from the waist to the knee. The Malabari washes his clothes as many times as they get soiled. He takes bath twice a day, and sometimes cleans the cloth while a part of it is yet on his body. The Malabari woman loosens a part of her *sāri*, washes it and ties it again loosening the other part which is then washed. By this process one *sāri* is kept clean by her for a number of days while yet it is being worn.

Malabar is richly endowed with coconut, the kernel of which is variously used. Coconut oil is used by the Malabaris in massage, shampoo and soap. The green kernel is used in cooking. It is flaked and dusted and mixed in vegetables and *dāl*.

This is the land and the people of Kéraḷa. Its theatrical art, like that of most other countries, has roots buried deep in religion. Some such theatrical varieties as *Kuthu* and *Kutiyāttam* are still confined to the precincts of temples. The excellence of these lies not so much in *mudrās* as in the discipline of story-telling.

Nevertheless, Kéraḷa's dramatic art reaches the summit of perfection in the language of the signs and symbols of the hand. In the paradisical atmosphere sumptuously endowed by the beauty of Nature, indubitably Malabar has nurtured one of India's finest art-forms. Kathakaḷi, literally the art of story-telling, rises as the *summum bonum* of Malabari life and surroundings, and as the ultimate Kéraḷa cultures; nay, it appears as added beauty to that of art and gods on earth.

Bhāratanātyam

In Tamil Nad, much earlier to the evolution of Kathakaḷi, the Brahmanic view of life had developed a theory of art which found expression in its temples—and a class of girls dedicated to the presiding deities became, in course of time, the repositories of the finest tradition of that art.

Culturally, Tamil Nad of the old represented the highest of three symbiotic civilisations which thrived in three distinct areas of south-east India, currently known as the States of Madras, Andhra, and Mysore. The Tamils, with a profound knowledge of the *Vedas*, delineated a disciplined philosophy of life in the bronze model of Nataraja, the Lord of Dance—Śiva, one of the Hindu Pantheon. Their own culture favoured the dance; the Telugus of Andhra Desa, who were more attuned religiously to the Buddhist way of life, developed a musical *lingua franca*,. Telugu, in which almost all South Indian songs, like the *kritis* of Swami Thyagaraja, were composed; and the Canarese of Greater Mysore (or Karnataka or the Kannada-speaking area) called it Karnatak music.

This region has since the Classic Period of India's history nursed a dance-form now commonly known as Bharatanatyam, literally meaning "the dance of the actor"—a name perhaps derived after the magnificent, encyclopaedic canonical work of uncomputable antiquity, Bharata's *Nātyā Śāstrā*. In 36 chapters, the *Śāstra* deals with drama, music, dancing, aesthetics, rhetoric, grammar, and allied subjects. Bharatanatyam closely conforms in spirit and procedure to the classic texts. How the principles of the classics have been honoured by it is provable from the close affinity that exists between its physical attitudes and one or the other of the 108 *Karānās* (attitudes of the body) inscribed on the *Gopurāms* of the holiest temple of Śiva Natarāja at Cidambaram or in the Brihadeshwar Temple, Tanjore. Though it is difficult to determine the precise date of origin of its main shrine, the Natrāja temple as it stands today grew up through a period spread over 1,300 years, reckoning from the sixth century A.D. About 90 *Kāranās* are also found inscribed on the walls of the Kesavacanna temple of the Tañjore which dates back to the thirteenth century A.D.

The Pallavas of Kāñci who were saddled in power until the end of the ninth century A.D. were great builders. Their territories were annexed by the great Cōḷā kings of Tañjore, Āditya I (c. 870-906) and Parāñtaka I (c. 906-953). The Cōḷās fell in the thirteenth century when their territory was shared by the Hoysalas of Mysore and the revived Pāṇḍya dynasty of Madurai.

The Cōḷā kingdom was one of the three great kingdoms of Tamil tradition giving the maximum political security to its people and supporting a new trend of social and cultural life. The Tamil culture developed unabated. The famous Hindu reformers Saṅkarācārya (A.D. 788) and Rāmānuja (A.D. 1100) both appeared on the horizon of the Brahmanic culture with a force that lasts even today.

In the midst of this cultural renaissance, growth of a religious *motif*, merged in the social behaviour of the people, for the Cōḷā architecture was a foregone conclusion. The style of the Pallavas was further developed and some great temples of the finest specimen of architecture were built. The temple of Śiva at Tañjore, built by Rajaraja the Great (985-1013 A. D.) and the temple built by his successor, Rajendra I at his new capital of Gangaikondacolapuram near Kumbakonam are a few examples.

And the Cōḷās' successors, the Hoyasalas, furthered the architectural activities and some ornate structures were erected at Belur and Halebid in Mysore. These are examples of exquisite beauty.

All these temples are repositories of dance poses. They bring to mind the Tamil's belief that the celestial Gandharvas and Apsaras (musicians and danseuses) were an inseparable part of the godly world; that where there was a symbolic god there were the danseuses. This gave rise to the concept of adorning the walls of the temples inside and outside with dancing figures for the amusement of the installed presiding deity.

Until recently temple festivals were inseparable from dance; and perhaps this practice helped the devout sculptor to carve the dancing figures on the stone and the craftsman to chisel bronze models of powerful body movements ever known to the world history of sculpture. These pieces of art are perpetual record of the philosophy of the rhythm of life. They recall to mind the sanctity of dance; that it is more to please the gods than the man.

The figurines on the stones and bronze of the past live. They live as if in the flesh of today. They will live thus for ages to come.

In the Middle Ages, the temple god was treated like an earthly king. He had ministers, a court, musicians and dancing girls. As a hereditary practice, the musicians and danseuses were the children of the servants and maidservants of the same profession, born and reared as in the temple precincts, but they might be sons and daughters of ordinary citizens offered in the service of the god, as a pious gift. They sang and danced before the presiding deity, just as the mythological Gandharvas and Apsaras did to entertain gods in the heaven. They were the *Brahmin Bhāgavatas*, literally "the servants of God", and their female counterparts Devadasis or maidservants of God.

Brahmanical autocracy during the Cōḷā rule furthered the institution of Devadasis, who indulged in orgiastic dancing. It would be a debatable point whether they later fell from their ideals and purpose of life and aligned themselves more with the biological needs of the human life. Whatever the truth might be, they were, until very recently, the preservers of dance tradition, which came to be called *Dāsiattam*—a preponderantly *lāsya* variety of dancing—as distinct from *Nātyā Mela* or *Sadir*.

Bhāgavatas' principal contribution was a dance-drama, called *Bhāgavata Mela Nātaka* based on the canons of the *Nāṭya Śāstra.* It was a community dance-drama in which all the participants were men. Bhāgavatas represented one side of the whole Bharata's art, while the non-Brahman *nattuvannars* (dance teachers) and their pupils, Devadasis, represented another branch of the art. Both these arts flourished side by side in Tañjore district which has produced some of the greatest dance teachers India has known.

The 'men's only' dance-drama is on the verge of extinction—and if it is lost, India's loss in the dramatic traditions would be irreparable. *Dasiattam,* on the other hand, underwent minor modifications, resulting in the modern Bharatanātyam. It was standardized and its repertoire crystallized and regulated into a sequence dance of three to four hours' duration by two prodigious brothers of Tañjore, Ponniah and Vadivelu Pillay, pupils of the famous musician Muttuswami Dikshitar, who lived about two hundred years ago. Its greatest exponent-teacher is Minakshi Sundaram Pillay of Pandanallur (since dead), Chokalingam Pillay and Ellappa.

In standardizing Bharatanātyam, the Tañjore brothers took *nāṭya* of the *Nāṭya Sāstra* as the foundation on which the structure of the dance was erected. *Nṛtt* and *Nṛtyā* being two complementary parts of *nāṭya,* they weaved the various patterns of Bharatanātyam under them. Under *nṛtt kārānās,* the 108 body postures, some calm and gentle, others fearce, orgiastic and terrible, *aḍavus,* the various forms of floor contacts by the feet, weaving rhythmic patterns (*jātis*) and *tirmaṇas* (concluding rhythmic flourishes); and under *nṛtya, abhinaya* action or expression of body, including *mukhābhinaya* (expressions of face) and *mudrās* (expression of hand) were classified.

Keeping this classification in view they standardized a Bharatanātyam programme in seven items : *Alārippu, Jātīswara, Śabda, Varṇa* (or *Swarajati*), *Pada, Tillānā,* and a concluding *Śloka* (or *Astapadī*). The outline of a *Varṇa* was fixed thus : *Swara* (*nṛtt*), *Sollukkatu* (*jati; nṛtt*), *Sahitya,* i.e., *Pallavi* (*abhinaya; nṛtya*), followed with *Swara* (*nṛtt*), Anupallavi (*abhinaya*) followed with *Swara,* and *Carana* (abhiṇaỵa) followed with *Swara* (*nṛtt*), *Jāti* (*nṛtt*) and *Tirmana* (*nṛtt*).

Such a programme of Bharatanātyam is apt to be characterized by energy, speed, exuberance and abandon. It is rich with emotional content, complemented by succession upon succession of body pattern of marked clarity and sculptural precision. It is a treat to the mind and the heart; it is a synthesis of the intellectual and emotional content; it has mathematical accuracy; it is a blend of the dance pure and the dance emotional.

As distinct from this, Kathakaḷi has a different appeal. Though its connection with Bharata's *Natya Shastra* is clear, its relation is not so direct as that of Bharatanātyam. It is more dramatic and mundane than the latter which is pure *nṛtt* and *nṛtyā* and extra-mundane. Kathakaḷi is purposeful by entertaining by dramatising the activities of God in a climate charged with supernatural art-behaviour. Bharatanātyam is devotional. Kathakaḷi being preponderantly Tandava, it is energetic, active, virile, violent, and athletic; Bharatanātyam is *lasya* and erotic. Kathakaḷi's feminine counterpart dance variety is Mohini Attam which lately fell into disfavour. Bharatanātyam technique stresses interpretation of *sṙṅgara rasa* and its variations; Kathakaḷi is an interpretation of *viārāsā* and its variations.

Body movements in Kathakaḷi seem limited than those used in Bharatanātyam. The former, however, employs more *mudras* than any other form of Indian dancing. In Kathakaḷi, the actor uses heavy make-up, while in Bharatanātyam the danseuse is content with the normal flourishes of facial beauty. In Indian dancing Kathakaḷi alone is performed in a ballet form; Bharatanatyam is a solo dance. The former relates a story; the latter is a fragmentary mood. Though the origins of the both is from the same source, in the former dance-drama, the actor remains mute (or at worst, if he is an evil character, shrieks); in the latter dance, the interpreter may sing. The antiquity of Bharatanātyam is provable from its sculpturesque body movements. The recent growth of Kathakaḷi is an established historical fact.

CHAPTER II

EVOLUTION OF KÈRAḶA ART

THAT dancing was prevalent among the early inhabitants of India, before the advent of the Aryans, in one form or another, is provable from the gestural code of the existing dance forms. During the earliest days of humanity, before man spoke a language, gesture was the most effective source of expressing thoughts. When man evolved effective symbols, the art of gesture was further developed. Even today when the languages of the civilization have achieved the highest marvels for expressing thoughts, the art of gesticulation persists and remains a predominant and an intimate associate of the be-all and the end-all.

Functional gestures were developed to a high degree, and the old Sanskrit codifications copiously deal with them. Added to them are elaborate commentaries and glosses. On the decline of the Sanskrit drama, folk dramatic forms have preserved them. Rudimentary gestures are found embedded in all folk arts. Folk theatre, like folk poetry, is an improvement on them. When the spoken part of a theatrical show is translated into gestures, the consolidated art is eloquent of the life and culture of a people. The pattern of these gestures conforms to naturalistic behaviour or is influenced by religious practices, which, in fact, made a lasting impact on the crude tribal gestures. Religious thoughts made an inroad in art forms and directly or indirectly influenced the motive force of regional theatrical arts.

Religious Perspective

In the Middle Ages, with the modification of Sāṅkhya dualism and the fundamental atheism to harmonise with the prevalent monism and theism, *Puruṣa* and *Prākṛti* became the positive and negative—the masculine and feminine—forces personified in the man and the woman by the tāntric sects. Small groups of initiates gathered at night, often in a temple or elsewhere where they offered evening prayers, propitiated ghosts and performed other rites. The gathering dispersed after a social meet in which the five *Ms* (*pancāmākārā*) courses were *madya* (alcoholic drink), *māṃsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *mudra* (symbolism) and *maithuna* (sexual intercourse). The sexual significance became morbidly religious; and the "Six Syllables" (*Sadakṣara*) : *Om mani padme hum* ("Ah ! the jewel is indeed in the lotus !") is indeed the sexual significance, mystically reminding the divine coitus of the Buddha and Prajaña-paramitra, and of Avalokitéśvara and Tārā.

These concepts seem to have had the impact of Sāṅkhya metaphysics, with its rigid dualism and fundamental atheism, teaching the existence of 25 basic principles (*tattvas*), of which "matter" (*prakṛti*) is the first, and "the person" (*puruṣa*) the twenty-fifth. Its important feature is the doctrine of the three constituent qualities (*guṇas*) : *sattva* (virtue), *rājas* (passion) and *tāmas* (dullness). Cosmic matter contains these in an equilibrium in its undeveloped state, but, in the process of creation, one or the other of these preponderates in different beings which accounts for divergencies in the nature of man. *Sattva guṇa* is present in all things good, wise, beauteous and true. *Rājas guṇa* inheres in things active, energetic, forceful, violent and fierce. *Tāmas guṇa* is associated with darkness, ignorance, stupidity, unhappiness, gloom and wretched. By a process of permutation, the three *guṇas* become nine : that is, *sattva*, *sattva-rājas*, *sattva-tāmas*, *rājas*, *rājas-tāmas*, *rājas-sattva*, *tāmas*, *tāmas-rājas*, and *tāmas-sattva*. Each of these nine *guṇas* identifies itself with a *rasa* : *śānta*, *sṛṅgara*, *karuṇa*, *vīra*, *hāsya*, *adbhuta*, *raudra*, *vibhatsa* and *bhayānaka*.

Tāntrism on a mass scale manifested itself in numerous patterns. *Vajrayāna* Buddhism believed in all feats of sorcery and necromancy. Tara, the Saviouress, became the chief divinity of this sect of the Vehicle of the Thunderbolt. A host of lesser divinities sprang up. These were called by demoniac names, such as *matangis* (outcaste women), *pisācis* (demonesses), *yōginīs* (sorceresses) and *ḍakinīs* (she-ghouls). This led to depicting the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with their Tārās, with many arms in ferocious poses, like the lesser gods of the Hindu Pantheon. Votive offering flourished during this period. The tāntric sects worshipped feminine deities and gave to women an important place in their cult, besides instituting orders of female ascetics.

Against this background, the cultural history of Kérala develops in the centuries preceding and following the Christian Era. It is largely clouded in the mist of mysteries and mythology. It cannot be ruled out that the gradual socio-religious disintegration on the decline, infatuation and rise of Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanism gave the society a licence to indulge in superstitions and blackmagic of the Tāntric Age. That Kérala responded to it with alacrity was due largely to its geographical and climatic conditions.

Sociological Bearing

When the first Cérā ruler of Malābār consolidated his kingdom, the society was seething with tāntrism and tribal rivalries. Constant internecine wars, however, reduced the society to shambles. To give it some stability, after the pioneering work of Shaṅkarācharya in the field of consolidation of the Hindu society, the patriarchal system during the Cérās shifted to *Marumakkattāyam* (matriarchal) in the twelfth century. With this social change the women of Malābār wielded a superior position. This superiority became more conspicuous in theatrical arts, which were confined to men alone for the elation of men and women alike. The costume of the actors, it is no surprise, expressed the essential femality.

Masks and hideous make-ups were inspired by the tribal "awakening" and the *tāntric* needs. Another reason for their rise was that *tāntric* Buddhism, before merging itself completely in Brahmanism, grew suspicious of all external phenomena that were engulfing its influence. Likewise Brahmanism feared the likely survival of Buddhism. The result of mutual fears was the growth of hideous personages from which sadistic pleasure was derived.

Partly to communicate their views and partly to popularise a new movement in socio-religious art, the medium of mass communication—the theatre—came in handy. Purely Brahmanic plays were written in the language of the noble, that is, Sanskrit, and others in the spoken language. They had a decided religious bias. Some revolved round secular subjects as well. The general theme of these plays was the victory of Good over Evil. And the conscious approach of all was to give a pleasing look to the virtuous character and a quaint appearance to the evil. Another distinctive feature was the assignment of female roles to men. This approach to the socio-religious problem gave rise to many patterns and forms of head-gears and masks.

The Crowns

It was for this reason that one of the oldest dramatic forms in Kéraḷa was called *Mutiettu*, meaning "wearing the crown".

Theatrical functions of the masks apart, they have its religious and ritualistic purpose as well. In north Kéraḷa, the masks are worshipped in a shrine with lights, offerings and invocations, just as the sword and the gun-rifle are worshipped in Coorg and Rajasthan or the penholder and ink are worshipped amongst the Kayasthas of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

In Kéraḷa, every god has a distinctive dress, but by the head-dress alone can he be identified. Cathan wears a circular halo crown five feet in diameter; Gulikan's rectangular crown is two feet broad and 20 feet high; Bhagavati's crown is massive than Gulikan's. With such enormity of the crowns, no doubt Kéraḷa actors must have appreciable athletic dexterity to execute rhythm, however slow. But when they are in the role-type, there emerges a new personality—that of a superhuman whose endurance and prowess rightly portray their godly character. Camundi bears 16 flaming torches stuck in front of the actor perpendicular to his body; and Hanuman crawls on his knees for hours together. Brahmins do not attend these performances.

Early forms of Theatre

Theatrical activities, in course of time, gradually developed to embrace the world of socio-religious life of the people of Malābār. What of these remain even today include (i) ritual and cult plays, such as *Bhagavati Pattu*, *Tiyattu*, *Panai Pattu*, *Kaniyar Kali*, *Tukku*, *Kali-attam*, and *Daivattam*; (ii) non-ritual though religious. *Cakkyar Kuttu* and its variations *Parabandham*, *Nangyar-Kuttu* and *Kutiyattam; Krisnattam; Tattilme-Kali* and the Ramayana shadow play; and (iii) secular plays, like *Mohini-attam* (a localised adaptation of the Tañjore School of dancing by women), *Korati-attam*, *Kai-Kotti-Kali*, *Thullal-Patakam*, *Kol-Kali*, *Kalyanakkali*, *Kayukottikkal*, and *Parisa Muttum Kali*.

Religious dances, such as *Bhagavati Pattu*, *Tiyyattu*, *Pana Pattu*, are those which are performed in the precincts of a temple dedicated to goddess Bhagavati, or even at homes in honour of the goddess on some holy or auspicious day of a festival. The second type includes highly technical dramatic performances like *Kattu*, *Krisnattam* and *Sanghakkali*. These are semi-religious owing to the presence of the atmosphere of sanctity and holiness, perhaps, on account of the abundance of Sanskrit, the language of the gods, in their compositions, or the incorporation of religious and *puranic* themes. The secular type of dances are the most popular ones.

DAIVATTAM is the dance of the gods. It is given the first importance in religious festivals called Tirayattam in north Kérala. These are the many gods and goddesses like Bhagavati and her several forms—Kali, Camundi, Bhadrakali, Sri Kurumba, etc.—who dance, bestow their blessings and prophesy events. In this night-long dramatic pageant, hereditary priests impersonate the actors. They are experts in exorcism, sorcery and dancing. In Tira festivals, they are assisted by their assistants, called *Munnuttas*.

Goddess Bhagavati appears in the Radiant Form of *Prasanna-rupi* at the *Kavu* (the shrine). She wears a silver diadem, and a pair of armlets and anklets. Her breast is entirely covered by a huge circular collar of gold set with red stones. Wreath of sacred red flowers provide a crown and a garland of white *Erikku* flowers adorn her.

Black and white geometrical patterns decorate the borders of her red skirt. Two attendant-priests hold her hands. The drums beat. The Goddess is invoked. *A Toottam* song progresses. Her divine attributes, acts of benedictions and valour are narrated. The actor-priest now possessed of the divine spirit is led to a nearby river to perform the initial rites and to bestow blessings on the people.

With the fall of the night, the ritual dance begins. The steps are measured, gestures are rhythmic, graceful and impressive. She then rests on the stool facing the shrine and meditates. The gathering is later blessed. She withdraws.

In the dramatic intermission following, two warrior gods appear with clubs and shields. They put on huge head-dresses. The faces are painted mask-like. Lips are elongated by fixing black, protruding, furry lips. Their costume consists of circular girdle provided with tassels and a skirt made of pleated pieces of red cloth. Their dance is vigorous and rhythm sustaining. At its close, they go about in audience to collect coins and distribute *prasadam.*

After midnight, Bhagavati reappears. Now, she is *Walia Tamburatti,* the Great Goddess. She is furious and trembling. The drums synchronise her vigorous dance in which she shakes her sword. At the end, she resumes her seat on the stool and pronounces benediction.

In the interlude now following, a torch dancer, who is a spectacular demon figure at every *Tira* festival, appears with 12 flaming torches around his waist. He dances to ward off evil spirits.

Bhagavati makes her final appearance at dawn. She puts on a magnificent head-dress made of interlaced palm leaves. Her retinue of gods, goddesses and demons surround her. The procession is led by a group of drummers. Flowery pagodas set in earthen pots are carried by the processionists who joyfully shout throughout the three circles they make of the shrine. Finally, the huge "mudi" is removed. Only ,the jewelled *mukat* remains. The goddess blesses the assembly and makes prophecies. Thus ends the festival and with it, the dance-drama.

Of the ritual plays, *Darika Vadha* (slaying of the demon Darika) is the most popular one. It is connected with the Bhagavati or Kali cult and is in the nature of a votive offering, a religious rite which follows a ritual worship. It is a two-act mythology : (i) Narada relates to Śiva the misdeeds of Darika. Śiva promises to end it by deputing Kali. (ii) Darika challenges Kali : It is an elaborate scene in which both ride in war-chariots. A wordy duel starts. It accentuates provocation and intensifies passions. Now fight ensues and with the dawn Kali slays Darika. It is a ghastly scene in which the demon's abdomen is ripped open and the avenging goddess drinks his blood. She adorns herself with the garland-like entrails of the *asura.*

PATAKAM : Of the secular dance-dramas, *Patakam* is a unique mixture of singing, dancing and acting. Technically, it is like *Prabandham*—from which it appears to have stemmed, except for the language of the play. In the former, it is Malayalam that predominates; in the latter it is Sanskrit. *Patakam* has, however, not entirely neglected Sanskrit. A *Patakam* actor is not merely an entertainer, but also one who is well-versed in mythology and religious lore and is possessed of a fine timbre of voice. His make-up is simple. A thin layer of sandal-paste is applied on his body and *kohl* round the eyes. He puts on a plain loin cloth hanging down the knees, with a girdle of another cloth. A small, conical crown adorns his head; arms and wrists are provided with ornaments. The play is staged in the open and the actor stands by an oil lamp to expound the story. He may act and dance a little.

CAKKYARKUTTU : Cakkyars enjoy the distinction of being the only Sanskrit stage artistes left. *Kuttu* covers both *Prabandham-Kuttu*, also known as *Vak* (word) as well as *Kutiyattam*, the art of storytelling ; highly dramatic and characterised by elegance of style, erudition and a profound sense of wit and humour. Stories are from the *Puranas*. The art employed is *Vacikabhinaya*, which deals with *Kaku*, the musical rendering of *Kavya* to surge emotional situations, and is supplemented by gestures. Music was provided by occasional drumming on a huge copper drum, *Milav* (an exact counterpart of which would be found in the Chinese theatre, judging from the illustration in Mr. Arlington's *Famous Chinese Play*). It has no dancing.

KUTIYATTAM is the most significant phase of the Cakkyar's art. The term signifies "joint action" by Cakkyars and Nangyars in propounding exclusively Sanskrit dramas.

Literally, the name means "composite dancing." It is a composition of dramatics, *abhinaya* and dancing. It is Kèraḷa's "artistic fossil" still hidden in the rock of ritual traditions of old temples. Yet, it is broad in outlook, prepared to accept external artistic and literary influences. Like the *Ramlila* of the North, which runs into numerous chapters of enactments for a fortnight or so, a single act of a *Kutiyattam* play may be staged for 10 to 15 days, each day for two to three hours. But unlike the voluminous theme of the *Ramlila*, the Malabari has a small story for *Kutiyattam*. It offers a peg on which the entire technique of a performance hangs. A play in which only three characters are involved and between them are fourteen verses and a few prose lines might take eleven nights of about 2-3 hours each to complete. An interesting one-act story is woven round Arjuna, the hero of the *Mahabharata*. It is from the Sanskrit drama "*Subhadra Dhanajayam*" wherein Arjuna wooes Subhadra. The act begins with return of Arjuna after wooing the famous bow called Gandhiva when he is told of the exquisite beauty of Subhadra. He falls in love with her and sets out to search her. He is assisted in this by his friend and companion Kunndinya, the court jester On the way they meet a *bhoot* flying away with the ballet. Arjuna bends his bow to shoot down the *bhoot* who drops her and flies for safety. She literally falls into Arjuna's arms. He fails to identify her but falls in love all the same. Suddenly she disappears. Arjuna sits to search for her in Dwarka where if she would not be found he might meet Subhadra.

Such a small story may take eleven nights; surely *Kutiyattam* is a highly evolved art of great artistic and dramatic potentialities. *Kutiyattam* plays deal with varied situations—humorous, satirical, especially on social and official life, moralistic for the youth, serious thoughts on the life's purpose and ribaldrous attack on sexual propensities of man. They have educative value : a whole audience responds to the theme.

Until the first quarter of the present century, a seven-act *Kutiyattam* play generally took a couple of months, each act taking between 8-9 days. It is preceded by a four-day precatory actions which are confined to *stapana* and *nirvacana* (preliminaries extending to the first two days of the play by the *sutradhara*). On the third day commences the *purusartha* in which the *Vidusaka* (comedian) is the sole character. Its scene is drawn from the "Village of Illiteracy" headed by a priest who is innocent of all knowledge of *mantra*, *tantra* and *vidya*. Discussion amongst the villagers is given in the form of a discourse high in dramatic qualities. The *vidusaka*, who is normally a man of extraordinary skill, mimes several characters and makes the atmosphere for the play absorbingly interesting. Beyond this he does not have any role, because what he relates has no relation with the theme of the drama. The Cakkyar presents in this introductory part all the essentials of the play—the *summum bonum*, called in Sanskrit *purusartha*, of life. It is entrenched round the social hypocracy in four main divisions—*vinoda*, *vancana*, *asana* and *rajaseva*. *Vinoda* is enjoyment of pleasures and may extend from minor to major actions of pleasures; *vancana* includes deception in all its minor and subtle shades, besides self-deception; *asana* signifies satisfaction of the palate; and *rājāsevā* is the service under the Crown. It is on the completion of the fourth category of *purusartha* that the conversation in the story cleverly leads to the emergence of the first scene of the drama to be enacted. The Cakkyar applies all the wits, humours and sarcasms in his discourses. Like the consummate cartoonist, who drives home his thoughts through the lines, Cakkyar raises humour and the hidden meaning. Whereas *purusartha* unfolds social hypocracy on the one side, it indirectly asks for certain morals.

The Cakkyar, therefore, recognises no law in enacting this piece. Everyone, from the commoner to the king, comes under his fire. By a sacred convention for enacting this, the *Cakkyar* enjoys complete immunity, for whatever he says it in *deva sabhas* (assembly of the gods) and in *Brahman sabhas* (assembly of the Brahmins). His observations go on uninterruptedly, and if anyone interrupts in any way, he will remove his headgear and walk off the stage. The votive offering of *Kuttu* thus comes to a sudden end, indicating sacrilege and profanation of a sacred right. Such a defiled *Kuttu* requires expiatory ceremonies for its revival. In the case of *Prabandham Kuttu* of the Cakkyars, this introductory piece is also enacted.

Kutiyattam performances, which begin at the conclusion of this "introduction" in the temple theatre (*kuttambalam*), a well-constructed wooden structure. Its raised dais is covered by a wooden pavilion, the ceiling of which is richly carved and painted with floral and other decorative motifs. The pavilion stands on four lacquered pillars (brilliantly coloured) and surmounted by *amalaka* capitals. They are decorated with plantain leaves, flowers and other articles. Its auditorium is provided with two tiers, the upper one for the Brahmins and the royalty and the lower one for the commoners. Behind the dais, a green room enclosure is provided with a door in the partition wall through which the actors can come in or go out; the dais is open on the other three sides.

The *vidusaka* translates the Sanskrit text of the play in Malayalam, so that the people may, in general, understand the story. *Kutiyattam* is almost free of music. The verses are chanted. To create a supernatural atmosphere with it, the chanting is in monotone. The Cakkyars have in it *abhinaya* as their main foret. They employ *angikabhinaya* (gestural action), *vaciabhinaya* (narration of words in a speech) and again *angikabhinaya*. In this, *Kutiyattam* resembles to a degree with *Doha* or *Roha* theatrical traditions of Saurashtra and U.P. respectively.

As a story progresses, to the accompaniment of song or a prose line, actors enact a dumb show dance. Full emotional effects are brought about by a synthesis of rhythmic steps, elegant gestures and meaningful facial expressions. The commentary that follows these at places where scope is for improvisation is an example of erudite scholarship, deep philosophy and shrewd observation or social behaviour. It gives it freshness and flavour.

To a good extent *Kutiyattam* costume resembles with that of Kathakaḷi. It is traditional : No changes are effected on the modern stage. Standard stylised representations of the role-types have come to stay. Arjuna, for instance, is dressed with a crown, kingly ornaments and garlands. His eyes are reddened and face painted in appropriate colours to present the whole figure. Subhadra, the sister of Sri Kriśna, is likewise dressed on the *minnukku* pattern. The court jester in a *minnukku* play attires himself in a perfect clownish manner. His make-up consists in giving a background of white rice paste on the face and hands, circular red marks being placed in the middle of the forehead, cheeks, tip of the nose, breast and fore-arms. The eyes are elongated up to the ears. Double moustache, with ends raised and then lowered, are provided. If flowers are stuck in one ear, betel-leaves are in the other. There is no skirt but a *dhoti*. The *Kutiyattam* stage is a permanent one. From Kathakaḷi it surprisingly differs at least in this that it offers opportunities for women to play feminine roles—an opportunity which is denied in the former art-form. In between these two forms of dance-dramas, there was in Kèraḷa another dramatic art wherein male characters remained dumb but the female ones did all the talking.

KRSNATTAM is said to have been organised by Manaveda, a member of the Royal family of Zamorins of Calicut and it marks a stage further in the development of the Kèraḷa theatre. Manaveda is credited with writing this play in Sanskrit. It was first staged in about 1650 A.D. continuously for eight nights. The story is woven round the many activities of Sri Krisna which have lent it a sacred position in the hearts of the actors and the audience. It is now surprising to find that the actors observe fast for the days of the performances and the pious amongst the audience on the day the birth of Krisna is enacted. Mimicry is the basic trait for expression. Certain of its characters wear wooden masks while others have their faces painted.

RAMANATTAM: Until now *Aharyabhinaya* in Kèraḷa theatre has been rather crude. A step ahead was thus taken by the Raja of Kottarakkara who subsequently dramatised the story of Sri Ram in eight plays and called it *Ramanattam*. It marked the initiation of a new movement, second in the series, in the Kèraḷa theatre and the modifications and requirements that followed were too conspicuous and national. Notable reforms were first introduced in the Kèraḷa stage in the eighth century A.D. by Kula Sekhara Perumal, the monarch-playwright and the author of *Tepati Samvarana* and *Subhadra Dhananjaya*; and by his Brahmin minister, Tolan, a collaborator and an actor who wrote *Atta-prakara* (a guide to *Natya*) designed to help the actors.

In the new phase, Sanskrit yielded to Sanskritised Malayalam, just as in North India spoken language underwent modification from Sanskrit to Hindi and from Hindi to Urdu. The actors originally wore masks, sang and chanted dialogues, but gradually changes were effected in the whole presentation. Speechless acting or pantomime was the natural development. Several other changes were effected in the technique of presentation and stagecraft. Music became a necessary component of the dance-drama. The scope of *abhinaya* was enlarged and dancing was introduced. The techniques of the histrionic traditions of Kèraḷa were consolidated and the ultimate was brought to the fore. Themes for it were drawn from *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavata*, *Siva Purana* and *Ramayana*. The new technique, originally called *Attakatha*, came to stay as *Kathakaḷi*.

A number of Princes and Namboodris have since contributed in enriching Kathakaḷi. They have written plays, acted in them and maintained troupes of erudite actors. The schools which were largely responsible for bringing about *Attakahta* were Vettam, Kallatikotan, Kaplingatan and Kotta.

Attakatha, a dance-play, or *Kathakaḷi*, a story-play, is thus the crystallized form of Kèraḷa's rich theatrical tradition which has culminated in highly pantomimic art.

It intimately associates itself with the secular and social life, culture and traditions of Kèraḷa. It would be no exaggeration to say that the summit of Kèraḷa stage has been achieved in Kathakaḷi. It reflects the martial character of the Malabari, and it uniquely expresses the national genius of Malabar in the realm of art, suggested by exquisite rhythm and beauty, literature, imagination transmuted in the emotional content of a story, and beauty combining the grace of *abhinaya* and *nritya*. The whole show produces a lively realisation of a story and affects the inner feelings of the audience.

Kèraḷa Actors

Though the early life of Kèraḷa actors cannot be definitely stated, some light can be thrown on the origin of the Cakkyars.

Like the Kathyaks of the north or the Kaganwalas of Rajasthan, Cakkyars are a community of dramatic artistes and story-tellers. They developed a caste-heritage art, more comprehensive and enlightened one. Cakkyars belong to the Ambalavasi (temple-dweller) caste, and "intermediate caste" between the Brahmin and the Nayar. Their services were assigned to the temples. Cakkyars form a separate sub-caste within this fold, with the vocation of the temple artistes.

When a Namboodri woman was suspected of adultery she was at once placed under "suspension" till her guilt or innocence was proved. A trial was conducted by competent judges drawn from recognised members of the Namboodri society. When the guilt was proved she was out-casted. The judges decided the "period" which was the interval between the date of her offence and the date she was out-casted. Any child born during this "cusp period", was a Cakkyar if a male one or a Nangyar if a female one. This is believed to be the origin of this caste. Their status is next to Brahmins. They are *Ottillengil Kuttu*, or those who, having been deprived of the right to learn the Vedas (*Ottu*)—because they are non-Brahmins—have taken to the vocation of *Kuttu* or *Natya*.

Cakkyars claim descent from the story-telling *Sutas* mentioned in the *Mahabharata*. *Silappathikaram*, a Tamil classic refers to Cakkyars. This work centres round a danseuse, Madhavi, who danced in a gathering of the elite of the city of Kaveripumpattinam the capital of the great Cōḷi country. The King himself as the supreme patron of the arts presided and as was customary presented Madhavi with 1,001 gold coins and in recognition of her great skill, the fresh leaf garland that he was wearing. The confidante of Madhavi took this garland to the aristocratic quarters of the city and offered the love of her mistress to anyone who could purchase the garland for 1,001 gold coins. Kovalan, the hero of the poem, happened to pass by and heard the announcement. He promptly paid the amount. He was led to the presence of Madhavi whose exceeding beauty and great skill in dancing and music captivated him. He fell in love with her so deeply that he neglected his faithful wife, his parents and his duty. From this infatuation of Kovalan the story moves to its tragic climax.

According to the popular version of this story, Madhavi was invited to dance at the marriage festivities of Kovalan and Kannakai (the son and daughter of two merchant princes of the city). She agreed to dance on condition that the person round whose neck the necklace she would fling at the conclusion of the dance, would be hers. This strange condition was accepted. The necklace fell around the neck of the bridegroom, Kovalan, whom she claimed. From this the tragic sequel developed.

MUSICAL HERITAGE OF KÈRAḶA

Clues about the musical tradition

Elankovadikal's *Śilappathikāram* is the first work to give clues about musical development during the period of Céran Cénkuttavan in Tāmilākam comprising the kingdoms of the Cōḷās, Pāñḍyas and Céras. *Kuṭṭu* was enacted and it provided some music, however limited and elementary. Traces are available of at least 20 *rāgas* which were sung during the performances of *Kūthu* and *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. These were sung according to a specific rule.

Kèr̃aḷa kings, though greatly assisted in the furtherance of dramatic arts, did not entirely neglect music. Sangr̃ama Dhīra

Kulasakhara Varmā (end of the fifth century of the Malayāḷam Era (M.E.) corresponding to the first quarter of the fourteenth century A.D.) wrote a few works on music, of which *Saṅgīt Śāstra Paradriṣva* is important. His younger brother, Āḍitya Varmā was a versatile musician.

The palm-leaf manuscripts on music found in the West Coast of India give commentaries on the Sanskrit texts in old Malayāḷam prose. They include *Saṅgīt Śāstram*, *Saṅgīt Cōōdāmaṇi*, *Saṅgīt Vidhikal*, *Saṅgīt Mañjarī*, *Sapta Swara Sancārangal*, *Swara Taladi Lakśaṇam* and *Tālaviḍhital.*[9]

Musical compositions of Kèraḷa Varmā of Kōṭṭayam (North Malabar), who came to Travancore during the reign of Umayamma Rani (about 1678-1685 A.D.), and produced the immortal work *Kèraḷa Varmā Rāmāyanam*, are of great significance.

Jayadéva's *Gīta Gōvind* exerted a proselytising influence on the religious thought and the arts of Kèraḷa. His *aśtapadis* are sung in temples even today. No doubt, Manaveda, Zamorin of Calicut, would have conceived *Kṛśnāṭṭam* through these. So might have been the case with *Gīta Ramam* by Ramapanivadan. This work contains several compositions set in *rāgas* and *tālas*.

In the Malayāḷam translation of *Gīta Gōvind—Bhasatapadi—* by Rampurath Warriyar, the erudite author of *Kucela Vṛttam Vancipattam*, several songs have been assigned different *rāgas* and *tālas* from the original ones.

The Golden Age for Kèraḷa music is reckoned with Kārtika Tirūnal, nephew of Mārthanda Varmā, the maker of the former Travancore State (now merged in Kèraḷa State) and known to the Malayālī as "Dharma Rājā". He wrote more than 150 songs, set in different *rāgas* and *tālas*, into his seven *Kathakaḷis* and *Kīrtanas* which were until recently sung by *Gāyakas* at Shri Padmanabhaswami Temple. In the early portion of *Balarama-Bharatam*, a treatise on dancing, Kārtika Tirūnal expounds several aspects of music, supported with quotations from Sanskrit works. It informs about the musicians and *vainikas* in his court. Amongst them and other scholars and poets was that genius of humour—the Birbal[10] of the South—Kuñcan Nambiyar, the great writer of *Thullals*.

CHAPTER III

THE ORIGIN OF KATHAKAḶI

WHEN the remote progenitors of Kathakaḷi traced its origin to the *ṭantric* (ritualistic) period of the Vedic Age or when they connected its growth from the popular, folk dance-dramas, they were not, in a way, far from the truth. The Malabari, an austere being, who has always identified himself with Nature, has developed histrionic arts for his enjoyment and spiritual elevation.

Enthralled by the beauty of Nature, the early Malabari *danced* in the forests : His dance was a power—a mixture of his passions, erotic pleasures and inner talks with the beauteous Nature, and his natural and graceful movements, elaborate gestures, picturesque costumes, grand harmonic make-up suggested by herbal plants of the forests and the vigorous and triumphant music emerging out of crude instruments manufactured by him: the dance-drama of Kèraḷa was apt to become ultimately a unique art of gallic grace and melodious music.

Folk dramas superseded the ancient Sanskrit dramas which were the exclusive preserve of a special class of people, for the former were more realistic and nearer the people than the latter which were abstruse. But it was not until the twelfth century that the art that was simmering in the woods of Malabar could assume a definite form. Jayadeva appeared on the cultural horizon of Tāmil Nād with his immortal work, the *Gīta Gōvind*[11] which epitomised the worship of Kriśna and Radha. A current passed through the entire folk art-world; its emotional appeal revitalised folk music, dance and drama. Later, in the seventeenth century, another devotee of Kriśna, Chaitanya, appeared on the scene. He gave the *Gīta Gōvind* such an operative form that it exists as a beloved song book even today. People translated its songs in dances, and in dramas. These two centuries are landmarks in the history of the South Indian drama. Since then a variety of folk art-forms flourished in the South. *Vakśagāna* developed in Karnātaka; *Terukuṭṭu* in Tāmil Nād and *Kuttiāṭṭam* in Kèraḷa.

In the context of this dramatic ferment, the birth of the immediate forefather of Kathakaḷi is seen. *Kriśnāttam* was the dance-drama on the life and activities of Lord Kriśna created by the Zamorin of Calicut. The date as computed in the *Kali Chronogram Grahya Stutirgathakaih* shows that *Kriśnāttam* was first staged in 1657. Its technique had the foundation of the folk drama, as its content had a religious inspiration. It is believed that the Zamorin had a vision of Lord Kriśna who gave the chieftain a peacock feather, which became the living symbol of this dance-drama.[12] *Kri'nāttam* players wore a peacock feather and thus commemorated the vision of the chieftain.

Kriśnāttam's pattern of art was based on the *Gīta Gōvind.* It caught the imagination of the people. Its fame spread all over Kèraḷa. Its success induced the neighbouring chief of Travancore–the Raja of Kottarakkara—to request the Zamorin for the loan of a troupe of performers on the eve of some festive occasion. It is said that due to internal feuds and political rivalry between the chieftains of the neighbouring States, the Zamorin, besides refusing to send the performers, insulted and humiliated the Raja of Kottarakkara with the remark : It is useless to depute the troupe, because your (Raja of Kottarakkara's) court would be neither able to appreciate nor understand anything of the highly artistic *Kriśnāttam* and the high standard of the performance.

Here the political rivalry between the two chieftains took a new turn. Now began the art rivalry.

Kathakaḷi was conceived.

Kottarakkara Thampuram, for that was the name of the Raja, initiated a parallel mode of entertainment, which he called *Ramanattam.* It was this name which was later transformed into *Attakatha,* and yet later into *Kathakaḷi.* While the Zamorin of Calicut, Manaveda's *Kriśnāttam* was a series of eight pieces based on the story of Lord Kriśna's activities, *Ramanattam* was also a series of eight pieces covering the complete story of Lord Rama-chandra starting from the *putrakamesti* sacrifice (sacrifice for obtaining a son) of Dasaratha and ending with the fall of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. *Kriśanāttam* was written in Sanskrit, the "language of the gods"; *Ramanattam* was in Malayalam, the language of the people.

Ramanattam became more popular.

To bring his creation on the stage, the Raja of Kottarakkara enlisted the help of Malabar's dramatic talent, an actor—the Raja of North Kottayam and two Namboodri Brahmins. By the end of the seventeenth century, the finished product of the new experience was placed before the world under the title *Kathakaḷi*.

Under the aegis of Kottarakkara Thampuram, the revolutionary revival of the ancient folk dance-drama of Kèraḷa in a new garb and an improvised form gave impetus to other folk traditions to play themselves up. This helped Kathakaḷi's development on a sound basis. In acting, the principles of Bharata's *Natya Sastra* were freely implemented; in *mise en scène* and dress and deportment the conventions of the folk theatre were meticulously preserved.

Much earlier to the introduction of *Ramanattan*, two older forms of dramatic representations in vogue in Kèraḷa were the *Cakkyar Kuttu* and *Kutiyattam*. The history of their origins dates back to the period of the Perumals, the Imperial Suzerains of Kèraḷa. These dramatic forms still preserve the most of the ancient traditions of the classical drama. The costume of Kathakaḷi has been much influenced by them. "The whole scheme of *abhinaya* (acting) and the use of *mudras* (hand poses) and gestures were bodily adopted in Kathakaḷi from them in addition to its borrowing and refinement of facial make-up and costume. Kathakaḷi became more attractive and popular than the *Cakkyar Kuttu* and *Kutiyattam*, in course of time, as unlike them, its performance was not restricted to the precincts of the temples." [13]

Dramatic traditions of Kèraḷa flourished under the royal patronage, and Prince's active participation in dance-dramas has entitled them to a permanent fame in the field of art and literature of Kathakaḷi. The Raja of Kottarakkara was himself an accomplished actor, and a great dramatist. Once he took the

Zamorin of Calicut off his guard, so a legend goes. He was jealous of the growing popularity of *Ramanattam.* To satisfy his curiosity, he invited a troupe of *Ramanattam* actors for a performance in his court. The Raja of Kottarakkara conceded the request and the troupe was deputed to Calicut.

In the performance, the Raja, without the knowledge of the other participants, took an active part. The Zamorin was pleased with the artistic skill of this actor. He announced the award of a prize to him (the Raja). When he was about to offer it, he recognized the actor as none other than the 50-year old Raja of Kottarakkara. The Zamorin was struck with surprise.

Ramanattam, with all its defects and crudities, was acclaimed as a great art.

In course of time this art was purified of all impurities. In this task, the personal contribution of Kèraḷa rulers has been remarkable. Other men of genius also contributed their mite.

As in earlier dramatic forms, *Ramanattam* players also sang the *padas.* But for the vigorous Kathakaḷi, demanding tremendous physical exertion, singing by the actors was exacting and tiring. A change in the practice was conceived by Prince Vettathu Thampuran, who introduced a few fundamental innovations. He provided separate singers, and introduced the *Cenda,* a percussion instrument, to announce a performance and give background sound effect. This drum's powerful and penetrating sound heightened the acting of supernatural characters appearing on the stage in hideous and fantastic make-ups. The religio-theatrical reforms brought *Ramanattam* performances outside the temples for the enjoyment of all sections of the community. Masks were replaced by make-up; *mudras* were accentuated; a variety of percussion instruments and characteristic constumes were introduced; singers and musicians formed an independent part of a show; and mime developed to a perfect art of mimicry.

Kathakaḷi became a word-tone drama, a dumb show.

Legend has it that the Raja of North Kottayam, Kottayathu Thampuram, had a dream for the costume of each class of dramatic characters. The dream showed only the upper part of the actor's body, and, therefore the skirts of all Kathakaḷi characters are identical in form and cut.

Kottayathu Thampuram was, as the story goes, an idiot in his childhood. But, in later years, he emerged as the most talented actor and a great Kathakaḷi composer of all time.[14] He composed four great works, viz. *Kirmeeravadham*, *Bakavadham*, *Nivathakavacha Kalakeyavadham* and *Kalyanasaudandhikam*. These are hailed as fine specimen of the *Kathakaḷis* judged from the ease and the adaptability in reading, singing and acting them. Literally these compositions are of high quality. They are the first *Kathakaḷis* to blend the flavour of the finest poetry in *slokas*, *dandakas* and *padas* and to exhibit the niceties of *sabdalankara* and *arthalankar* in equal proportions. As an actor-dancer, Kottayathu Thampuram had no equal. His superb execution of the role of Urvasi has left an imprint on the history of Kathakaḷi acting.

Ramanattam, on its road to blossom into Kathakaḷi, had a golden period between A.D. 1665 and 1743.

Remarkable contributions were also made by the King of Travancore, Kartika Thirunal[15], to Kèraḷa's literature, art and dance. He wrote seven *Kathakaḷis*, viz., *Rajasooyam*, *Bakavaddam*, *Subhadraharanam*, *Gandharava Vijayam*, *Kalyanasaugandhikam*, *Narkasuravadham*, and *Pancaliswayaṃvaram*; and a treatise on dancing in Sanskrit, *Balarama Bharatam*. Numerous scholars and poets received his royal patronage and were in his court. Two of them, Puthiyikal Thampaṇ and Ittirarissa Menon wrote first class *Kathakaḷis Kartavirya Vijayam* and *Santanagopalam*, respectively.

Kartika Thirunal's efforts were also directed to popularising Kathakaḷi among the people. He instituted a tradition of arranging Kathakaḷi performances at various festivals and on the Navaratri night. For the last over 200 years people of Malabar have been enjoying this dance-drama on these occasions at no cost.

Works of rare merit are also credited to Prince Aswati Thirunal, nephew of Kartika Thirunal. Many in the art world had pinned their hopes on him on his succeeding the throne, but the Providence willed otherwise and cut him off in the prime of his youth. He, however, lives in the *Kathakaḷis*. His Sanskrit *prabandhas, Vanci Maharaja Vijayam* and drama *Rugmini-parinayam* and another work *Sringara Sudhakaram* are immortal. He also wrote in beautiful Malayalam *Rugmini*, *Swayamvaram*, *Ambarisha Caritam*, *Poothana Moksham* and *Poundraka Vadham*.

Virakerala Varma, the ruler of Cochin (984-1003 M.E.),[16] wrote *Kathakaḷis* at the rate of one *Kathakaḷi* a day. He also maintained a troupe of Kathakaḷi actors. Fifty of his compositions have been collected so far. No composer ever produced so many *Kathakaḷis*.

No significant contribution was made by Swati Thirunal, who composed innumerable music pieces. But his younger brother Uthram Thirunal, the heir-presumptive, was grooming himself to play a historic role as a patron of Kathakaḷi. During his reign, Kathakaḷi had a Golden Era, like which was never before or after. He wrote *Simhadhwaja Caritam*. His court poets, Irayimman Thampi and Kilimonoor Koil Tampuram, wrote several *Kathakaḷis*. Thampi produced *Uttara Swayamvaram*, *Keecaavadham*, and *Daksha Yagam;* and Tampura, *Ravana Vijayam*.

Uthram Thirunal's encouragement to the phenomenal growth of Kathakaḷi was in two directions, maintenance of a troupe under the able supervision of Vilayikot Namboodri, and employment of a good number of gifted artistes, like Nalan Unni, Damayanti Nanu Pillay, Bhiman Paramu Pillay, etc. New recruits were examined and approved by the King himself. They swelled the ranks of the troupe. Permanent court artistes were assigned permanent character roles, for they had achieved perfection in executing those roles.

Another landmark created in the history of *Kathakaḷi* by Uthram Thirunal was making available to the public scripts of the *Kathakaḷis*. Under his royal patronage, the Kèraḷa Vilas Press, the first printing press in Malabar, brought out an edition of fifty-four *Kathakaḷis*. The lead given enthused other presses to bring out books on the *Kathakaḷis*. A large collections of the *Kathakaḷis* in book form are available now, and yet hundreds of *Kathakaḷis* remain to be printed.

In the long history of the origin and development of *Kathakaḷi*, the contribution of the rulers of Kèraḷa is monumental. Their personal participation on individual basis, writing of the *Kathakaḷis*, maintenance of troupes in the palace and encouragement to artistes and composers—all these direct efforts helped in removing any stigma from the practice of this art and invested it with decency and dignity. They also added the desired lustre to the dance-drama to catch the attention of the common people.

To suit the modern concepts of life and to conform to the changed times, dynamic *Kathakaḷi* is writing its history anew.

CHAPTER IV

THE ART OF KATHAKAḶI

All forms of Indian dancing derive authority or the purity of their art-content from Bharata's *Nātya Śastra*. But each of them is characteristically different from the other, both in content and form. *Bhārat Nritya* of north India and *Manipuri* of east, for example, belong to one family of the emotive dance (*nṛtya*) and of the pure dance (*nritt*), and claim the *Śāstra* as their source, but are widely apart in technique. The former is more mundane than the latter; but both extol and portray the activities of Lord Kriṣna; both have gestures which conform to no canon of *abhinaya*. *Bhārat Nritya's Natwari* dance is essentially erotic in approach; *Manipuri* is full of pathos; *Bhārat Nritya* has drive in it, *Manipuri* is passive; *Bhārat Nritya's* Natwari style conforms to Tandava variety, and its mutilated version of *Jaipuri Kathak* style to *lasya*, whereas *Manipuri* is *lasya*.

What is true of *Bhārat Nritya* and *Manipuri* is also true of Kathakaḷi and *Bharatanatyam*. And there is no similarity between either of these pairs of the four forms of dancing. But what makes Kathakaḷi a unique art is its ballet character. *Manipuri* is also preponderantly a group dance; but Kathakaḷi is a meaningful pantomimic dance-drama. It has, therefore, rich gestural code.

Kathakaḷi's preponderantly pantomimic nature has developed a highly stylised mimicry. It employs the four *abhinayas* with ease. *Abhinayas*, or modes of conveyance of theatrical pleasure to the spectator, are, according to Bharata, four, viz. *Sattvika*, expression of thoughts by the efforts of the mind (*Bhava* and *rasa*); *Angika*, conveyance of ideas by the movements of the various parts of the body (gestures); *Vacika*, spoken words, singing, shrieking, etc.; and *Aharya*, the dress, deportment and *mise en scène*.

Psychic conditions which accompany the incidents of a story, like perspiration, tears, trembling, horripilation, petrifaction and such other emotional causes, are classified under *Sattvika Abhinaya.* Incidents of a story are told through musical dialogues and verses (i.e., *Vacika Abhinaya*). This vocal accompaniment is interpreted in acting by means of *mudras* (hand symbols) and gestures. This is known as *Angika Abhinaya.* All these three *Abhinayas* together with *Aharya Abhinaya* have a peculiar combination in Kathakaḷi; and these make it an interpretative dance drama to the accompaniment of music.

The art of Kathakaḷi is the art of acting and mimicry. It is a compound art. Its preponderative dramatic character is vividly reinforced by dance, music, poetry and painting. A meaningful Kathakaḷi expression is, therefore, never without the expressive movements of the organs of the body (accompanied with facial expressions), and various other physical attitudes (combined with *mudras*)—all governed by the laws of rhythm.

In Kathakaḷi, stress is laid on gestures to allow striking dramatisation of the incidents of a story. It first expresses itself into a dramatic art and then in the dance-art. It comprises a variegated movements of the body. There is nothing vaguely mystic or casual in its gesture-apparatus; the dance in it is visible as the art of movement is made rhythmic and logical. *Natya* and *nritya* are blended in one movement, although mime predominates. The use of colour, costume, and make-up, peculiar and suitable to Kathakaḷi's singular requirements, present a unique show and create an unearthly atmosphere. The grace of facial expression leaves a deep impression on the spectators' mind. Symbolism and gesture express not simply the most subtle emotions of man, but also of the object, realisation of human personification, scenes, etc., around. In the present-day *nautch*, the dancer is concerned mainly with the froth and facile radiance of the surface; and it lacks in the expression of an idea and in depth and subtlety. Kathakaḷi embodies the art of all these, because it does away with speech altogether.

In the development of the art of mimicry, symbols of the hand have played an important role. With their help a whole literary expression is reduced to elementary notions.

There are sixty-four basic hand poses which connote five hundred words, while the alphabet of the eyes express emotions. *Mudras*, as the hand poses are called in Sanskrit, are a passport to alluding a Kathakaḷi story and, therefore, their code neatly completes the grammar of gestures. Their permutations can be employed to convey any number of meanings requiring any detailed explanation in the modern concept of story-telling. They are used both statically and in movement to convey some meaning or to weave a pattern of dance. They are a miniature dance in themselves. A perpetual motion of graceful arabesques is created by flowing and fluttering fingers and the movement of the wrist. They culminate in an emotional experience and paraphrase the complicated syntax of a Kathakaḷi.

In the art of Kathakaḷi, all emotional qualities, and psychic conditions acquire remarkable outward manifestation, and *mukhabhinaya* (facial mime) is cunningly, sometimes lightly, employed: face remains the only index of the heart and the mind of the role-type. While the *Kathakaḷis* use elaborate similies and hyperboles, and fingers permute into *mudras* to represent words of comparison such as *like*, *as if* and *same as*, the eye-balls roll evanescently to tell the miracles. "The dark eye-brows utter the hidden secrets of the heart. Contending feelings speak with a brace of tongue in each eye and even the same eye delivers opposite moods at the same time. The face becomes the open drama in which the story is drawn in successive shades and touches of lineament. And then there is the dance."[17] It has only a few sections of *nritt*, but a vast treasure of *abhinaya* of the hands, the face and the eyes.

According to the theme, a Kathakaḷi song suggests the rise of a particular *bhava* and *rasa* (aesthetic delights), and the dance and mimicry are rendered most effectively in harmony with these aesthetic appeals. The powerful music heightens the moods of the actor and adds life to acting. He dances to the melodies of the song and executes the various passages with well-defined *padaghats* (footwork), attractive, graceful and harmonious movements and gyrations. The footwork, intricate at that, accompanies thumping movements and angular "walks." It provides scope for the amplification of an emotion and the abridgment of the climax of a story. In the heroic sentiment, for instance, the powerful footwork trembles the earth below and cuts short the final action.

In the whole repertoire of mimicry, there is a conglomeration of different elements borrowed from the various indigenous dramatic sources, like *Cakkyar Kuttu* and *Kutiyattam*, after a thorough modification in them in accordance with the conditions under which they were preserved. In interpreting a common idea in a fascinating manner, a skilled Kathakaḷi actor, therefore, presents "a cream of art" of the blended compound complexities of creative energy, of literature, language, poetry, drama, dance and music, aesthetics and vital and harmonious movements, full of suggestive mime, symbolism, melody, colour, grace and magnificent intricacies and subtleties of dramatic expression and architectural and pictorial beauties. Kathakaḷi rises as a dynamic and passionate art-play that casts a trance on the audience and holds it in its grip for hours together.

As Kathakaḷi is a story-play, interpreting a *drsya kavya*, its various contrasting characters are presented. There are good and bad characters, demons and gods, worldly and unworldly role-types. Kathakaḷi's religiosity is a forerunner to the glorification of the virtuous and the gods. This religious fervour had a social purpose. On the art-plane, it circumscribed any temptation to develop complex characterisations and minimized the depiction of "inner conflicts" in the human being. Kathakaḷi developed as a positive art relating the activities of divine and semi-divine beings. There is no individual characterisation : all characters are grouped under role-types according to their castes, quality and nature. Each group is distinguished from the other by specific make-ups.

In India, the term "dancing" does not fully connote the classical sense when it is applied to the four forms of "classical" dances prevalent : Kathakaḷi is more than dancing; it is a dance-drama, appropriately called in Sanskrit *nataka*. The basic attributes of *nataka* are offering of salutation of invocation to the God of the stage, use of physical gestures, gaits, exposition of emotions, employment of minor limbs and hand-poses, arrangement of drums, recitation of poetry, mode of speech and intonation, flowering out of a play, costuming and make-up. When a drama is a pantomime, dialogues are not spoken but danced or interpreted through gestures. Kathakaḷi is the art not of *nritya* (interpretative dancing), which expounds a story by propounding different emotional situations and their ultimates the *Rasas* (sentiments)—, for the story is told by gestures of the hand and the climax for different characters is heightened by shrieks or facial mimes, leave alone the "pure" dance interludes, called *Kalasas.* Like the Persian and Moghul miniatures, which carry insets called *Hasiya*, *Kalasas* serve as windows to Kathakaḷi pieces. As the story moves, so are the gestures displayed. The movements are lyrical but the poses relapse the actor into stationary positions which are like punctuations in prose. This subtle difference from the rest of the dance-forms is to be recognised in a study of the Kathakaḷi dance-drama. It is the actor's whole body that vibrates to the rhythm of the drum for the exposition of *nritya*; it is the interpretation of a study by facial mimicry that delineates moods to express thoughts and to heighten dramatic effects—enriched, of course, by the lyrical song and music. Virtually, this overall picture of Kathakaḷi makes it a "rhythmic drama", rich in design and colourful in appeal.

Kathakaḷis

The *Kathakaḷis* combine the excellence of both the literary and the dramatic flows. Themes are woven round tragedies and comedies. The dialogues are in songs and the intermediary incidents of the stories in verses. These dialogues are in Malayalam; the incidents in Sanskrit and Malayalam. Verses introduce the actors to a scene and end with the words : "And so they spoke."

Themetically, the *Kathakaḷis* are dominated by violent and angry scenes in *vir* and *raudra rasas*; love (*sringara*) is perched somewhere within them. An actor's weird make-up, unwieldy costume and virile gestures may seem inconsistent to love or gentleness, but in tender situations, "a sensitive atmosphere of affection" gives a contrasting life to a Kathakaḷi play and relieves the audience of sustained vigour tending to boredom.

Be as it may, a Kathakaḷi performance is fragmentary in nature, weaved in a pattern of several sectional scenes. From a literary drama it differs in two respects : In a written drama the characters are not introduced in the beginning and there may or may not be a moral or religious conclusion; in a Kathakaḷi dance-drama, these two elements lay its foundation.

Kathakaḷi literature affords a wide scope for the development of music and contemporary arts. Dancing to the tune of the singer and the rhythm of the drummer, and using a stylised gestural language, an actor executes well-defined foot-strokes attractive and harmonious movements and gyrations. The whole organic organization of rhythm renders aesthetic delights to a dance piece, the mimicry transcribes words into a code of artistic pantomime. The transmutation of both emotion and motion into the narration of the play increases the rhythmic vitality, sweet cadence and the beauty of the art; and, with these flow the eternal joy of the audience. The swift movement of the limbs is acrobatic, but it adds to the dramatisation of a play. The religious sanctity behind this dance-drama, preponderance of mimicry, absence of the personal factor of the actors, unique craftsmanship in *aharya abhinaya*, vivid understanding of the application of aesthetic delights and mastery of the laws of rhythm—are some of the significant factors lying at the root of the most exciting dance-drama of Asia, Kathakaḷi.

As a picturesque art, Kathakaḷi has won full admiration and wide attention of all art connoisseurs who are greatly impressed by its originality and systematised plastic movements bringing to life the ancient arts of painting and sculpture. It has made as distinctive a local variant as the *Wayang-Organ* of Java and Bali has done to the parent art of *Bharataṇatyam*. It also exerts a marvellous cultural influence on the western dramatic art to which it has contributed the most essential principles of dramatisation, music, acting, language and dance, so as to make each subject an integral part of the whole. A remarkable change was introduced by Adolph Appia while staging the famous operas of Wagner by developing his own *Theory of the Word-tone Drama.* He introduced simple rhythm of music in acting and dancing. It has reached a state of perfection and achieved graceful acting of the Kathakaḷi's type. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Appia wrote with great admiration of the art of Kathakaḷi that the people of the West Coast of India delighted in spending nights in aesthetic enjoyment of a Kathakaḷi performance.

CHAPTER V

THE TECHNIQUE OF KATHAKAḶI

ALTHOUGH the enthusiasm of the people in socio-religious activities is fast on the decline, on almost any night during the dry season, especially on the full moon nights, the silence of a Malabar village will be disturbed by high sounding and piercing bursts of drums. The waves of sound across the ether broadcast the news that a play would be staged. It may be religious, semi-religious or secular.

Kathakaḷi performances are not confined to a temple's courtyard; they are held in the open under the sky. Before a performance begins, *Cendakaran*, the instrumental musician, beats the drum to announce the news that a dance-drama will be held shortly. This "nervous and insistent tattoo" is called *Kelikottu.* It makes every one ready to witness the performance. The village-folk—men, women and children—begin to assemble.[18] They are drawn from as wide an area as the sputtering bursts of drums and advance news-broadcasters cover. The eager audience crouches on the land in a circle around *Cendakaran.* The night's "standium" has the covering of a clear, star-studded sky; cool breeze rustling through the jagged patterns of palm fronds; children wandering back and forth aimlessly or running to a hawker or pestering their mothers or aping a character of a previous play; people discussing a role-type, an actor, a character, a story or a matter of current or religious interest. And those among the audience who are tired from the day's hard work on their fields go back and sleep until they are awakened by a relative or a friend or by the noise from the stage, to witness the favourite hero play or a climatic battle scene.

A near-the-climax atmosphere thus surcharged with extra-activities and expectancy is shaken by drumming "to please the atmosphere and the deities." It is done free at the temple of the village deity. For this *Sevakali* (literally, service play) serves three main purposes, viz. first, pleasing the gods; second, creating silence in the audience; and, third, "making *reclame* for the actors by giving a foretaste of their wonderful work of art." In its indigenous form, Kathakaḷi has no stage in the modern sense. The centre of the "stadium" is the stage provided with a huge brightly polished brass lamp of coconut oil. It has several crevasses in which run the wicks. It stands three to three-and-a-half feet above the ground. The wicks burn in a number of flames, but cast a shadow below. The upper half of the actors, however, draws enough light to be visible to the members of the audience sitting at the farthest corner of the "stadium." The audience sits in darkness.

There are no back-curtains, no stills, no sceneries. But behind the lamp, there is a simply designed *Therissila,* a rectangular silk curtain, held by two members of the troupe. Actors who have to appear first stand hidden behind it. During scenes the curtain is dropped to the ground and removed by the two men. The job over, these men go about on other errands of the stage, like pouring oil in the lamp-well, adjusting the thick wicks which constantly threaten to gutter and burn out, arranging the banana tree trunk support against the wicks gliding down in the well, and assisting the actors on odd jobs. The stage is also provided with a small stool. This is used for many purposes. In the "curtain-look," for instance, the actor stands on it; on other occasions an actor may rest on it.

Musicians stand in a half circle behind the actors. They number four to twelve. The orchestra is normally composed of a pair of heavy cymbals, a gong, a drum called *Maddalam* (which is a counterpart of the *Mridanga* used in *Bharatanaṭyam*) and the *Cendal* played with sticks; and, in addition, a couple of singers. An elaborate orchestra consists of four drums, flutes, a time-beater, a pair of cymbals, a gong and singers. Musicians do not wear any special constume. They are normally bare-chested in a village show or with a *kurta* on the modern stage. The actors are profusely dressed mostly in billowing skirts, crowned with massive head-dresses and provided with the accessories of the face and finger nails. The "actresses" are adolescent boys, for they are nearest to feminity and have simple dress. On the modern stage, of course, many dancing troupes have women to enact female roles. The whole atmosphere is thus set for the dance-drama to start.

In the repertoire of its technique, Kathakaḷi has seven items to be presented in the following sequence:

(1) *Todayam*—the basic *nritt*;
(2) *Purappadu*—debut of the hero and the virtuous character;
(3) *Tiranokku*—"curtain-look" by evil characters and demons;
(4) *Kummi*—preamble for the female character's appearance;
(5) *Kathakaḷi*—the main play;
(6) *Kalasam*—a passage of vigorous dance which serves as a hyphen between two pieces of verse-play; and
(7) The concluding benediction dance

KATHAKAḶI DANCE-DRAMA BEGINS

The night has fallen. It is nine or ten. The call of the drums has rent the air. The audience is alerted. Critics wake up for a critical scrutiny of the actors' skill.

Therissila is drawn by two men. Music begins. Drummers display their cleverness. Religious songs are sung. They purify the atmosphere. And dancers covert behind the curtain.

They are young students, sometimes children of the actors. The preliminary dance behind the curtain is commonly referred to as *Purva-ranga* by Bharata in the *Natya Sastra;* in the language of Kathakaḷi it is called *Todayam.* And, when the actors are seen on the stage, *Todayam Puraffaln* (which resembles to the performances termed *Nandi* by Bharata), is performed.

Todayam is a devotional piece of dance and an integral part of the sacredness of the Kèraḷa stage. The young artistes don no costume. A simple white *mundu*, the loin cloth, is tied round their waist.

As in *Alarippu* of *Bharatanātyam*, the basic technique of Kathakaḷi lies in *Todayam*.[19] It contains the genesis of every difficult passage of pure *nritt* sequences in Kathakaḷi, with no element of *abhinaya* or meaningful *mudras*.

This graceful and energetic dance over, the singers are heard chanting the *Manjutara*, a selection of some verses from Jayadeva's *Gita Govind*.

Drumming continues. Music is powerful. Wicks are bright and the royal ensign glitters. The whole climate enthralls the audience who will assuredly witness the play with rapturous delight !

All await the appearance of the hero.

Purappadu or the debut, signifies the first appearance of a character on the stage. It is a piece of a preliminary dance. It serves to announce the virtuous qualities of the hero; the audience is assured of the ultimate triumph of good over bad.

In this presentation dance, actors stand sideways with their knees bent. The technique of presentation is all the more intricate if the debut is of a hero or a heroine.

The three preliminaries before the commencement of a Kathakaḷi drama—*Maddalam*, *Todayam* and *Purappadu*—have a tradition, which has lost its significance for reasons not peculiar to Kèraḷa alone but common to all dance-forms of India, namely, political and socio-religious. These preliminaries have been borrowed from the Sanskrit-cum-Prakrit stage—the authority for which might have been drawn from the *Natya Sastra*. A play was originally enacted before an audience as a socio-religious necessity and, therefore, the invitation was free, by beating the drums rhythmically. The practice continues, though in a modified form, and the "invitation" is to the audience and the characters alike. It was the usual belief of the ancient dramatist that drumming pleased the Lord of the stage, Śiva, who sent two of his emissaries to perform a divine dance and bless the assembly. The drama began with a *geyapad* (singable verse in Sanskrit), portraying the creative, amorous activities of the deities. They produced music and rhythm—and completed the story.

With their uncanny make-up, other actors stand waiting for their entry. They recreate an unearthly world of demons and gods, cowards and heroes, monkeys and human beings.

And amongst these if a demon is to appear violent drumming of high pitch drums is incessant. The curtain is drawn as high as the arms of the attendants can stretch. The whole atmosphere is surcharged with earth-shaking and hair-raising activities. The sound of quick and heavy foot-steps can be heard from behind the curtain. Its synchronization with the sound effect of the drums heightens the climax. The entire climate forebodes that a terrific personality is about to appear. Suddenly a coloured canopy appears, as if from nowhere, over the curtain and a rumbling growling noise is heard. Drums burst into shattering sounds. Here is a shriek; and there a groan ! But before the eyes can catch the character, fingers are seen rising in the centre of the curtain. The left hand fingers are covered with long thimbles. The two hands are kept about three feet apart. They clutch the curtain. Fingers glide across its top.

There is deafening drumming; but no singing.

To the accompaniment of the drums, the anti-hero shakes the curtain violently, and breathless the audience catches an occasional glimpse of the top of a glittering head-dress, which seems to be gyrating madly in some infernal whirlwind. He pulls the curtain towards him; then plugs forward and fans flames. With gusto, the fire illuminates the character's face and enables the audience to spot him out by his weird make-up.

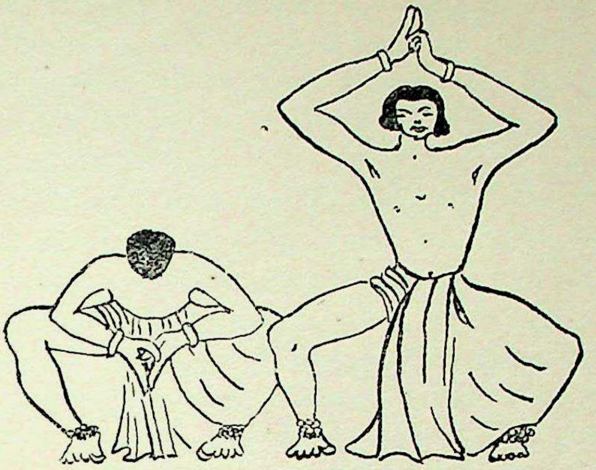
The feverish pitch of excitement over, the curtain is dropped and the whole figure of the character emerges after a great deal of suspense. The curtain is pulled off the stage from its right wing.

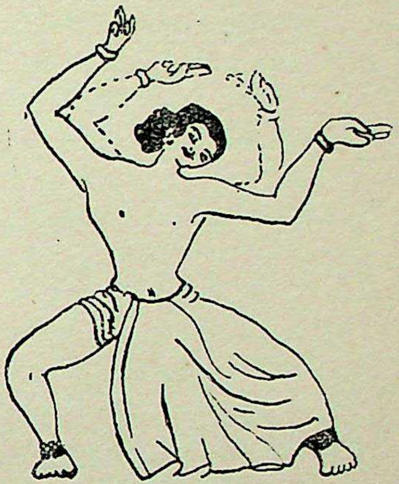
Gesticulation begins. Muscles tremble. The actor takes a few paces back and forth; looks at some object or remembers some thing or is struck with some idea.

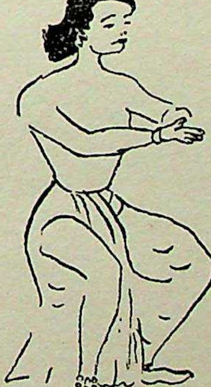
Thus develops *Tiranokku* or "curtain-look".

For male anti-heroes *Tiranokku* is prescribed and for female characters there is another standard dance—called *Kummi*. In it,

KALASAMS







gestures and movements are modified and smoothened to lend gentleness and elegance so much necessary for feminine characters. Paces are slow; roles are passive, and subsidiary.

In full swing,. the story begins to unfold itself. Violent drumming fades.

In narrating a story the whole dance is divided into parts : that which conforms to *nartana* employing the accessories of drama, and that which is pure dance and has all the subtleties of *nritt*. The essence of the play is given out by *mukhabhinya* and gesticulation and the language of the hands relate the story, while *abhinaya* amplifies the plot. Stories usually depict love scenes, battles, heroic exploits, tender moments, religious activity—in fact, all scenes of life that occur from birth to death. For dramatic realism, a few actual accessories, such as red liquid for blood, are used. Such situations as death, birth, fondling of child, playing of instruments and drinking are enacted with stark realism. In these, the tenets of the *Sastra* are violated and the narration is turned into a graphically mimetic art.

Kalasams are pure dance passages performed in pure *tandava* style. They punctuate two verses, two scenes. It is here that in Kathakaḷi an important role of *nrtt* is discovered.

Now, the play concludes. An actor dressed as a god appears. He preserves the religiosity of the Kèraḷa stage. Maybe, he is an integral part of the play or is especially imported character. The objective of this traditional practice is to shower blessings on all those who participate in the play and those who witness it. It keeps alive a spirit of godliness in Kèraḷa.

From the sequence detailed, Kathakaḷi's basic characteristic of a dance-*cum*-drama is unfolded. How the various limbs of *sangita* have been synthesised to bring about an underlying unity of all Indian dramatic arts in Kathakaḷi is unique. It is the only form of the histrionic arts in India, which adumberates, in principle, the three essentials of the Sanskrit drama, *natya*, *nritya* and *nritt*.

CHAPTER VI

DISCIPLINE FOR THE PUPIL

INDIAN dancing is essentially moulding of the human body in successive patterns of rhythmic and emotionally beautiful swings. These patterns are beyond the functions of a normal body. Special discipline for the body is needed to enable it to respond to unusual forms weaved in the course of dancing. An intensive dance training is called for to make the body flexible and supple.

To achieve fluidity, a Kathakaḷi pupil undergoes extensive and vigorous training from an early age. A complete alteration in the behaviour of the body is effected. Massages and oilbaths are an essential aid to awaken muscles, joints and nerves and to control their behaviour. Each part of the body is reconditioned to call it into play at a slight actions of the actor. For a free play of emotions each *upanga* and *pratyanga* minor and accessory limb is treated separately; each finger, for instance, has an independent movement, and no two fingers move in sympathy with each other.

Thus remodelled, the human body is adept to cast itself into the actions of gods and demons.

Between the age of 11 and 14 years the pupil goes to an *Asan*, the teacher of a *Kalari* (a kind of gymnasium) and offers to him *danam* (a present) either in cash or in kind—clothes; and with his *guru-diksha* (benediction) he enrols himself for training. The pupil receives a *kutcha* (a piece of rough cloth, 3 yards long and 6 inches broad) from the teacher, and ties it round his waist. Afterwards, oil sesamum is lightly rubbed over his body, and then he is taught to stretch, move, and wave his hands and legs so that nimbleness and agility may be obtained in movements. When the pupil begins to perspire through this exercise, he lies flat on the floor with face upward, and later turns to the ground, knees resting on a soft matting of straw and plantain fibre. The preceptor, supporting himself by means of a rope above, "shampooes" the pupil with his leg massaging, or, rather with his big toes going dexterously and elaborately all over the joints and muscles for more than half-an-hour. This massaging brings flexibility and relaxation in the muscles and joints of the body. In the noon, he is trained in dexterous and rhythmic movements of the body and legs.

For a pupil, the most painful part of the training is body massaging. But if he has to learn Kathakaḷi he is to submit to it humbly, because of all the various types of massage the most important is the one which is designed to call the body into the basic Kathakaḷi pose. It is as follows :

(i) hold the chin tight against the throat, face in the normal front position;
(ii) stretch arms to the full, straight and parallel to the ground;
(iii) hold the wrists at right angles between the hands and arms;
(iv) as against the apparent stiffness of the body, hold the hands rather limply and with relaxation;
(v) push the buttocks back forming a concave curve by the spine, keeping the knees widely spread apart;
(vi) split the legs, knees widely spread out;
(vii) curl the toes of the feet, tilting the inside of the soles upward; and
(viii) hold the entire posture thus on the sides of the feet forming a 15-degree angle from the soles to the ground.

To mould the limbs into this stance, the pupil is required to place his knees in two circles drawn three feet apart on the ground. He lies flat by the belly, holding the soles of his feet together. The hands are held in the same but inverted position. The masseur begins his job by massaging the joints of the feet by his big toes The process is repeated several times daily until the legs are flattened and the knees outstretched on a level with the buttocks.

Following the massage is the split leg training. It resembles acrobatics, but in reality it is an essential feature of any dumb-drama, wherein jumps of a certain class of animals are to be presented. The Kathakaḷi actor in the role of a monkey, for instance, has to make jumps in the air, with split feet quick leaps are taken in the air and on descent on the ground the legs are held spread out, the instep being in *sampad.* To balance the body, hands have quick motions to perform.

In the curriculum of training the third course consists in the discipline of the movements of eyes, eye-brows, eye-balls, cheek, neck, lips and such other accessories of the body employed for the expression of different emotions. The training is arduous. The pupil opens his eyes nearly double the normal size; rolls the eye-balls to and fro and sideways, sometimes rolling the iris back completely through the upper or the lower lid, the eyes remaining wide open so that the whites of the balls are visible; trembles the eyelids with half open eyes as in rage or the flight of a bee; and moves the eyes slowly across the eye-corners, up and down and in a circle. The strenuous practice makes the actor's eyes obedient to his mind.

Disciplining of the body over, the pupil is set to "see" and to "show" the letters and the spirit of a story. The pupil sits facing a blank wall, while the teacher sitting beside him improvises the story. With his eyes, the pupil portrays the words that the teacher speaks. Thus the narrative passage is first practised by alluding its contents by the eyes, and later with gestures and movements.

In the final stage of training, the pupil is taught the formation of *mudras* and their use. Movements in keeping with *tāla* are also taught. Both hands and feet follow the rhythm of the drum. It takes the whole childhood of a pupil to learn these courses of training.

When a pupil proves his skill in gestures, he is presented in a Kathakaḷi performance.

Proficiency is achieved in course of years after strenuous practice and rehearsals known as *Colliattam,* i.e. acting with the accompaniment of song and rhythm. The minimum period of practice for a Kathakaḷi actor is six years; and every year during the rainy season (June to August) he has to undergo an elaborate massaging in a *Kalari*. The whole process is repeated over again.

It is only when an actor achieves a free and dexterous movement of the various limbs of the body and a mastery over the formation, combination and permutation of fingers into single and double hand poses that he is called upon to play a Kathakaḷi role.

An actor is considered to be skilful if his acting is elaborate—an acting which demands long experience, vivid imagination and complete mastery over presentation.

ANGIKABHINAYA
(*Action of the Limbs*)

Components or the limbs of the body gesticulate rhythmically to produce some asthetic effect Not that all components vibrate or are set into motion to create an appeal. But *angas, upangas* and *pratyangas*—the three categories of limbs : major, medium and minor—individually and collectively co-operate in *bhavabhivanjana* (delineation of mood).

CHAPTER VII

SYMBOLISM AND GESTURE

In Kathakaḷi stress is laid on the precise use of gestures and rhythmic movement of the body and limbs. Gestures are classified under three categories, viz., *Prakritik* (natural), *Pratirupi* (imitative) and *Prasarit* (amplified). The attributes of these are—

(1) "Natural" gestures are unconsciously produced when an actor is moved by some emotion.
(2) "Imitative" gestures represent or reproduce the form of an object in all its aspects objectively and symbolically.
(3) "Amplified" gestures are those which are formed by the elaboration of secular purposes of the orthodox types of *Tantric* (ritualistic) symbols. Worship (*aradhana*), offering (*dana*) and benediction (*varadan*) are examples of this category of gestures.

These gestures are exhibited by three respective controlling agencies, viz., first, the face; second, the body (or limbs); and third, hand poses (*mudras*). Various facial expressions, which rise and fall with the human emotions, are naturalised in the dance language; but in the case of the body movements, a conscious effort is made to imitate a characteristic attribute of a role-type, e.g. the jump of a monkey. Gestures which serve to narrate a story are *Prasarit.* This function is largely done by *mudras* and *sanketas.* The head manifests emotions and comprises the actions of the neck, eyes, eye-lids, pupils of the eye, eye-brows, lips, teeth, nose, ears, chin, cheek, and tongue. The movement of the limbs comprises the movement of the feet, heels, ankle, toes, waist, sides and, in fact, of all the movable and flexible parts of the body.

Finger signs as opposed to *mudras* are employed to indicate and describe some action. They are known as *sanketas*.

Besides natural positions, the head has thirteen movements, the eye-brows have seven movements, the eyes have thirty-six glances, the neck has nine attitudes, the eye-balls and the eye-lids have nine actions, the nose, the cheek, the lower lip, the chin and the mouth has each six actions and the facial expressions are of four kinds. In this way the different fundamental movements have been mentioned by the great sage, Bharata. In Kathakaḷi, all the above movements are not used. All that it uses are : nine movements of the head, six movements of the eye-brows, eleven glances of the eye and four attitudes of the neck. But for the benefit of the readers all the actions described by Bharata are discussed below:

A—FOURTEEN ACTIONS OF THE HEAD

(i) *Akampita* (shaking). The head is moved side-ways, up and down. This helps in connoting the following : to point, to recognize, to question, conversation, faultless and innocent.

(ii) *Kampati* (quick up and down movement). This is used in expressing excitement, doubt, settle, threaten, question and pride.

(iii) *Dhutia.* In this the head is lightly shaken. This helps to describe the following :

Unagreeable, trouble, surprise, side glances, vacant and to check.

(iv) *Vidhuta* (frequent movement). This is an action where the head is moved frequently, and is used to express the following :

to catch cold, to fear intoxication, to feel feverish and drunkenness.

(v) *Parivahita* (sideway swing). When the head is moved from one side to another, the action is called *parivahita.* Its usages are :

source, wonder, pleasure, remembrance, anger, anxiety, trouble and playfulness.

(vi) *Adhuta* (tilted). It is to lift the head obliquely and to keep it in that position. It represents : pride, ambition, corner glances and self-sufficience.

(vii) *Avadhuta* If in the *Adhuta* position the head is once bent down, it is *Avadhuta*. It symbolises the following :
information, invitation, to tell and to make sign.

(viii) *Ancita*. In this the head is bent on one side. It represents the following :
ill-health, swooning, intoxication, trouble and anxiety.

(ix) *Nihincita* (to lift the shoulder). In this the head is raised a little and shoulder touches it. The eyebrows are curved. This is shown by a danseuse only. Its usages are the following :
separation from the desired thing; in the absence of the lover, the silent exhibition of love; the separation, the sentiment of the lover; self-restraint; to suppress the dignity and honour.

(x) *Paravrtta*—is to bend the head from one side. It is used in expressing the following :
turning and seeing at the back.

(xi) *Utchepta*—is to keep the head up. This position signifies high and holy things.

(xii) *Adhogati*—is to keep the head down and bent. It is used in expressing :
shyness, modesty, obeisance and sorrow.

(xiii) *Lolita* (motionful). The head is kept moving in all the directions. It expresses the following :
swooning, disease, intoxications, clemonical excitement.

(xiv) *Prakrita* (natural). The head is in its natural position. It helps in connoting the following :
holy things, to study and to think.

B—THIRTY-SIX KINDS OF GLANCES

(*i*) *Rasa Drstis* (sentimental glances) : Eight in number : *Kanta* (lovely), *Bhayanaka* (terrible), *Hasya* (comic), *Karuna* (pathetic) *Adbhuta* (marvellous), *Raudra* (furious), *Vir* (heroic), and *Bibhatsa* (disgusting).

(*ii*) *Isthāi Drstis* (principal glances) : Eight in number : *Snigdha* (friendship), *Hrsta* (hilarious), *Dina* (mild and lowly), *Krudha* (angry), *Drpta* (proud), *Bhayanvita* (down with fear), *Jugupsit* (inquisitive or anxious), and *Vismita* (amazed).

(*iii*) *Sancari Drstis* (accessory glances) : 20 in number : *Sunya* (void), *Malina* (gloomy), *Sranta* (tired), *Lajjavita* (bashful), *Glani* (dejection), *Sankita* (doubting or suspecting), *Visanna* (disappointed or heavy with grief), *Mukula* (closed), *Kuncita* (narrow), *Abhitapta* (extremely distressed), *Jimha* (crooked), *Salilata* (mellowed), *Vibhranta* (astounded), *Vitarkita* (doubting), *Ardha Mukula* (half closed), *Vipluta* (confused), *Akekara* (eye-ball repeatedly rolled), *Visoka* (free from grief), *Trsta* (trembling), and *Madira* (intoxication).

C—EIGHT KINDS OF LOOKS

Sama (steady look), *Saci* (looking through the eyelashes), *Anuvrtta* (look of configuration and identification), *Alokita* (surprised look), *Pralokita* (looking sideway), *Vilokita* (looking back), *Ullokita* (looking up), and *Avalokita* (looking downward).

D—NINE MOVEMENTS OF THE EYEBALLS

Bhramara (spinning the eye-balls), *Valana* (twisting, three-cornered movement of the eyeball indicating kindness, mercy, etc.), *Pata* (drooping), *Calara* (restless movement), *Sampavesa* (drawing the eyeball in), *Vivartana* (looking askance), *Samudvrtta* (raising the eyes and looking upwards), *Niskrama* (going out), and *Prakrta* (natural look).

E—NINE MOVEMENTS OF THE EYELIDS

Unmesa (to open), *Nimesa* (to close), *Prsta* (to open wide). *Kuncita* (to slightly bend the lid). *Sama* (natural position), *Vivarttita* (to throw upwards), *Spurita* (to flutter the lids), *Pihita* (to close furiously), and *Savitadita* (injured eye).

F—SEVEN MOVEMENTS OF THE EYEBROWS

Movements of the eyebrows follow the actions of the eyelids and eyeballs. They are seven—

Utsepta (to throw the eyelid upward), *Patana* (to release the eyelids downward), *Bhruakti* (to move the eyebrows to and fro and afterwards holding them upward), *Catura* (to spread), *Kuncita* (to bend downward), *Recita* (to raise any one of the eyebrows), and *Sahaja* (the natural position).

G—SIX ACTIONS OF THE NOSE

Nata (to close the nostrils), *Manda* (hiding), *Vikrasta* (to open the nostrils wide), *Sochwasa* (to breathe in deep), *Vikundita* (to contract the nostrils on disapproval or jealousy), and *Swabhavika* (natural position of the nose).

H—SIX MOVEMENTS OF THE CHEEK

Ksam (downwards), *Phulla* (fully stretched), *Ghurna* (stretched and spread), *Kampta* (shivering), *Kuncita* (contracted), and *Sama* (natural).

I—SIX MOVEMENTS OF THE LOWER LIP

Vartana (bearing), *Kampana* (fluttering), *Visarga* (spouting), *Vinighana* (to bend inwards), *Samadrsta* (to pierce the lip by teeth), and *Samudga* (natural).

J—Six actions of the chin

Kuttara (to gnash the teeth), *Khandana* (to rub the teeth together), *Cinna* (to contract the teeth), *Cuttkita* (to open wide), *Lehita* (to lip), and *Sama* (natural).

K—Six actions of the mouth

Vinivrtta (to open wide), *Vidhuta* (to open obliquely), *Nirbhanga* (downward), *Burgna* (to open sideways), *Vivrtta* (to open by separating the lips), and *Udvahita* (to open upward).

L—Four kinds of facial expressions

Swabhavika (natural), *Prasanna* (to be pleased with surprise), *Rakta* (the reddening of the face, as in anger), and *Syama* (the expression as in excitement).

M—Nine movements of the neck

Sama (natural), *Nata* (bent), *Unnata* (upward), *Trasra* (bent on sideways), *Recita* (quickly whirling round), *Kuncita* (slightly bent), *Ancita* (spread and bent on one side), *Vatita* (moved on any side), and *Vivrtta* (facing other person).

These various *mukhya-karmanis* (fundamental actions) are supplemented by the movements of the chest, leg, stomach, waist, calf, thigh and shoulder. When all the movements of two or more than two movable parts of the body are combined a meaningful gesture is produced. And, since every movement is graceful and artistic every gesture is a meaningful art of deep symbolic purpose. Various symbols and hand poses, supplemented by physical attitudes, speak a powerful language to the eyes of the spectator.

Describing the importance of the gestural code, Sarangdev says in the *Sangita Ratnakar* that the hand indices or poses (*sanketas* or *mudras*) should be used in a way to express sentiments with the aid of feeling conveyed through the eye, the eyebrows, the facial colour and the different limbs of the body.[20]

Where the hand is, there the eye must go; where the eye goes the mind must follow; and the object contemplated by the mind must bring out the natural and the appropriate feeling; herein lies the sentiment of action.[21]

Dance-gestures include several divine actions of celestial dancers and they have their application and utility in the feelings, sentiments, emotions and aspirations of human beings. This representation of sentiments and emotions (*rasas*) in various physical attitudes and postures is based on certain *archetypal forms* which idealised the plastic conception of emotions.

Symbols of the Hand

Mudra literally means "a seal". It is described as symbol of the hand. It is a visible pose representative or suggestive sign of an idea or something tangible or abstract. The *mudras* serve as the alphabet of the pantomimic language used in acting.

Refinement in hand poses was caused by ritualistic practices, though, perhaps, the only form of "speech" of the early man might have been gesticulation. It cannot be denied that through a process of evolution and refinement various gestures have come to stay. The formation of various *mudras*, both single and double, can be identified with the forms of animals and birds and plants and flowers. None of the *mudras* represents an ugly object. The *pataka*, for instance, is the basic *mudra*. It literally means 'a flag'. In it all the fingers are stretched and the thumb rests by the side of the first finger. It is a commonly used hand pose. It is used in the daily life. Symbolically, it is used to receive some offering, to give an imprint of love to a beloved; to indicate the heavenly sky of the underworld, to tease a child, to extend an assurance of respect and confidence in the other (as in an astrologer), to extend a promise, to grant benediction, to bless, to adore and to represent innumerable other "purposes". Though practised thus in the common life, its significance is rarely realised until a dancer explains or a priest reprimands, if not used at a *havana* or a religious rite.

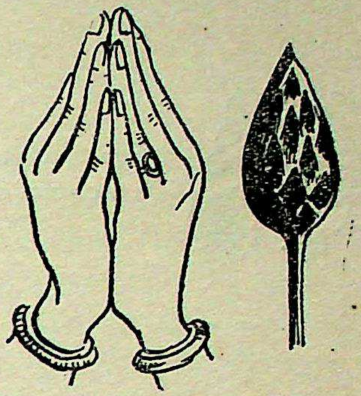
In the origin of *mudras*, deep rooted religious, social and literary functions are discernible. At times, these underwent minor modifications to suit growing literary needs or dramatic situations. Day-to-day behaviour of the people also influenced "social hand poses". Mere decorative or functional hand poses derive form from the Nature's gifts—foliage and animals and birds. Literary and religious character of *mudras* is more pronounced than the rest, largely because through the words of thought man lived by religion. The mute *risi* saw a snake with a large hood and expressed to his devotee-followers by the hand called *sarpasirsa*. His was a keen power of observation, assimilation and manifestation. By the hand and feet he completed a gestural code : by the permutation of the fingers he alluded innumerable objects and thoughts; by the feet he showed several gaits. Indubitably, by thoughts and words he produced immortal works.[22]

In *havan* (sacrificial fire) had other religious functions, the hand was observed to use several forms. In offering the lotus-bud both the hands formed the three-fourths closed double hand pose "Anjali" which in its open form had a social function of drinking water. A slight modification in this hand, namely by closing the *Anjali* hand, the lotus-bud hand, *Padmakasa*, (*Figs*. 5, 6, 7) was formed. For offering *ghee* to the sacrificial fire a long wooden spoon was held fast; and it gave the form of the hand pose, *Mudra*, with the fingers curled in the palm and the thumb resting on the forefinger. Where the thumb is inserted between the third and fourth fingers, it is symbolic of the rod of the spoon. (It does not represent any deterioration in the formation as some seem to feel.) Similarly, *Mukula* (bent fingers, thumb touching the tip of the forefinger) and *Ardhacandra* (half-moon) hands have their origins from one action of offering incense to the sacrificial fire. The hand in *Mukula* holds the incense and returns after offering it in *Ardhacandra*. *Sikhara* is peak and *Sucimukha* is the scissor's tip. In both the forefinger is stretched straight and the remaining curled in the palm. The thumb in the former rests on the second

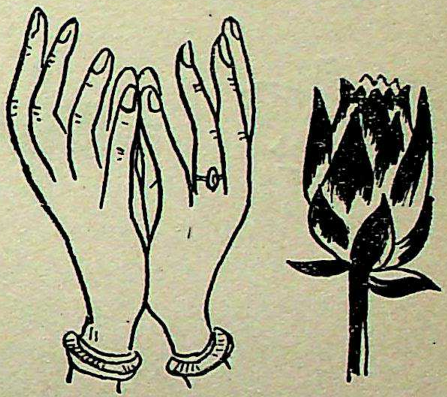
THE ORIGIN OF MUDRAS

Here is another example of imaginative yet functional hand-pose
This falls within the 'flora' category.

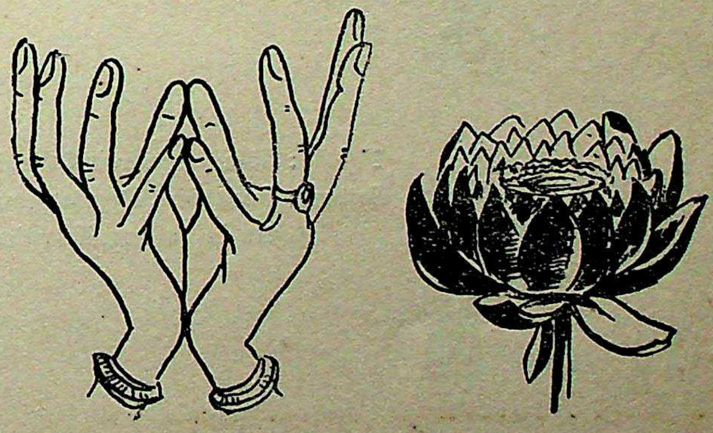
Lotus bud



Lotus half opened

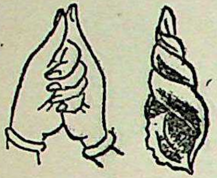


Lotus-blossom

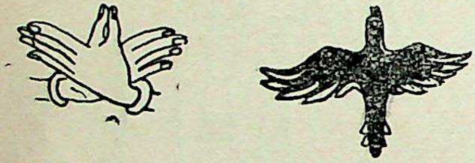


THE ORIGIN OF MUDRAS

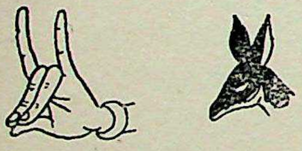
Classical handposes have been derived from representative animals, birds, flowers and other objects. Here are a few specimens.



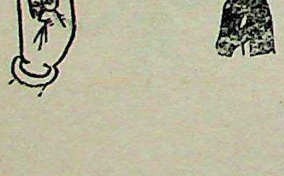
The conch on the right is reproduced by two hands. This is a case of an imitative hand-pose of ritualistic origin.



Here is a bird, may be a Garuda, flying and how is its movement copied by double hands ! The fingers flutter to show the flying wings. Sages drew the 'form' of a hand-pose from the shape of the fauna. The choice for a particular bird or animal fell because of its innate nature. Literature assisted in this task.



Top : Side formation of the deer.
Bottom : front view. Deer as much prominently figures in art manifestation as the religion.



finger while in the latter at the root of the forefinger. This slight difference in these two Kathakaḷi hands can be traced to the forms of two objects: a mountain and a scissor; a palm tree and a creeper. Functional variation from one thought to another within a group or as between others was a later development. Because of this, formations and usages differ in different ancient dance texts, notably *Natya Sastra* by Bharata, *Abhinaya Darpan* by Nandikeśwara, *Silappathikaram*, *Hastalaksana Dipika* and *Kathakaḷi* [23]

Literary association of *mudras* is undoubtedly with Sanskrit. Malayalam being partly Dravid Tamil, partly Sanskrit and partly peculiar to its own variations has a difficult syntax. *Mudras* so elaborately explain a piece that this difficulty is surmounted. However, *Kathakaḷis* have excessive Sanskrit to help expressing through *mudras*. Where elaboration or interpretation of a range of *sancāri bhavas*—amplified emotional attributes—is not desired or possible exact *mudras* are prescribed for single words or personalities, such as *if*, *when*, *but*, *now*, *I*, *elsewhere*, *sun*, *lion*, *Visnu*, *God*, *mother-in-law*, *father-in-law*, *brother-in-law*. As *mudras* follow each word, attributes are elaborated by instances and metaphors. If a *beautiful girl* is to be expressed in a dance-drama piece, the Kathakaḷi actor will first give the appropriate *mudras* for the words and then start elaborating the *beauty* of the girl by introducing some such metaphors as "beautiful like the lotus-bud", "tender like the petals of rose", "beauteous like the moon", "modest like the touch-me-not plant", "with deer-like eyes", "with bow-like brows" and "luxuriant foliage like locks in which eyes of men—even saints—get strangled". Similarly, attributes of Gods are elaborated. Lord Śiva, for instance, is interpreted by several *mudras* pertaining to snakes on his arms and round his neck, to Sri Ganga in his locks, to half-moon on his right side of the head, to *tri-sula*, to his forehead eye, to the activity of destroying demon Mayulaka and so on.

To understand the language of the hand a certain amount of concentration of mind is required. The knowledge of the language and syntax will, of course, facilitate appreciation. Nevertheless, for one who has a proper religious background a study of the Brahmanical literature, even the translation of a Malayalam-

Sanskrit verse is sufficient for understanding *mudras.* Besides, concentration like which is needed to grasp a child's tottering words full of feeling, emotion and desire, in exposing a poetry's meaning, *mudras* are a great aesthetic experience. Poetry resides in the fingers, essence of moods in the face and successive rhythm in limb; make-up and costume and music are complimentary components of a Kathakaḷi performance.

Hand poses are the soul of India's word-tone dance-drama Except for their religious association with the Brahmanic view of life, nothing seems to hinder their internationalization for adoption by foreign forms of dancing. The religiosity has actuated their regional character in the world context. Already some "secular" *mudras* of Kathakaḷi have been adopted by the eastern and western dance composers. If efforts are made to evolve more permutations of secular *mudras,* there is every likelihood of their acceptance by foreign dances. This may call for modification in the formation and revision in the connotation of ideas of the existing *mudras.* But the effort would be well deserved. Kathakaḷi has already set an example. It transcended the language limitation and modified certain *sastric mudras* to suit its peculiar needs. Besides, the weak Brahmanic influence in Malabar held out promise for their modification to suit the many religious and social needs. Malabar has been for centuries a land to nurse varied cultures and religions; and, therefore, it developed Kathakaḷi as an entertainment art, though Brahmanic themes were woven in the *Kathakaḷis.*

CHAPTER VIII

MUDRAS

In the preceding pages, *mudras* have been explained as "instruments of instruction" with the actor and the instructed audience in alluding and narrating a play Their importance is due to the preponderance of mime in acting.

It seems that with the development of the art of dancing in Kèraḷa *mudras*, diverse usages became more artistic and elaborate as a result of constant use. Like the language of the deaf and the dumb, of savage tribes and secret societies, and of children and trained animals, hand poses in Kathakaḷi have developed a rich language of gesture. The alphabet of the hand, as *mudras* are, form a complete vocabulary of more than five hundred words which most commonly occur in a dance story and which describe concrete objects or express an emotional situation or relate an incident in simple words. It is possible that as this histrionic art develops towards perfection there may be many more permutations of *mudras* and an increased vocabulary of connotations and usages.

Mudras have many local variations; and each dance style had its own set of hand poses with or without any meanings attached to them. But they are peculiar to Indian dancing. In Kathakaḷi, however, they have an important role to play. They are "a pictorial-plastic pictograph". Bharata has conveyed that each *mudra* is so full of meaning that a combination of them make a pattern of dance. They are also mentioned, sometimes differently due to local variations, in other treatises of dancing, like Nandikeswara's *Abhinaya Darpan*, in the *Hasta Laksana Dipika*, and the *Silapathikaram*

The functional purpose of a *mudra* may be either imitative, suggestive or imaginative In relating a story, the dancer relies on his skill in both the operative fields of art, the cultivated and the gifted. Where an object, such as a deer or a lotus-bud, is to be interpreted, an appropriate hand pose standing for the object itself is used. But in suggesting certain ideas, just as a lover suggests the degree of his love to the beloved, he employs such *mudras* which variously suggest the quality and quantity of love. Then, in the repertoire of a dancer's mute vocabulary are hand poses which embody certain imaginative characteristics.

By themselves these hand poses are like a keyboard. They are never exhibited without the aid of supplementary gestures of other limbs of the body, especially the face, and the mental attitudes of the role-types in accordance with the thematic emotion. In translating a word or a phrase, the fingers of the hand are manipulated according to a defined pattern and the position of the hand held thus is determined by the size of the body of the dancer and the situation of the role-type.

The functional purposes of the hand poses are served by four varieties of *mudras* : *Asamyukta*, *Samyukta*, *Samana* and *Misra*.

In *Asamyukta* or *Samyukta mudra* representations single hand poses or double hand poses are held to imitate or express objects. By *Samana mudras* more than one object are suggested. In the mixed variety of hand poses, called *Misra mudras*, both the hands are held, each in a different pose, to indicate certain imaginative situations.

Bharat's *Natya Sastra* deals with 24 single, 13 double and 27 mixed *mudras*; while an old Malayalam manuscript gives us 24 single and 40 combined *mudras*. The *Silappathikaram* refers to 33 *mudras* in all. There are some other works which treat with 28 single and 24 combined hand poses.

In Kathakaḷi, *mudras* seem to have been evolved from two standard works—*Agamas* and *Natya Sastra*, and they connote the usage of a group of ideas and objections. Whereas some *mudras* have only the double usages, many have both single and double usages. An average Kathakaḷi actor attains perfection in the use of only four *mudras*, viz., *Pataka*, *Kataka*, *Mudra* and *Musti*. Generally these four *Mudras* suffice to depict a story.

The movement of various *hastas* (hand poses) according to their formation, sentiment and emotion, has been classified by Bharata as follows:

Utkarsa (exuberant), *Vikarśa* (pulling asunder), *Vyakarśa* (attraction), *Parigraha* (receiving), *Nigraha* (abstaining), *Ahwana* (inviting), *Jodana* (whipping or goading), *Samslekha* (embracing), *Viyog* (separation), *Raksana* (protecting), *Moksana* (releasing or salvation), *Dhunana* (shaking), *Viksepa* (throwing downward), *Visarga* (rejecting), *Tarjana* (threatening), *Cedana* (piercing), *Bhedana* (chopping or splitting), *Sfatara* (breaking), *Mutana* (squeezing or splitting) and *Tadana* (beating).

The positions of the hands held for depicting objects are essentially four. By turning from a side the hand and the fingers inward to the body, the action of *Avestitham* is performed. The movement counter to this action is called *Udvestitham* In *Vyavarthitam*, the hand and the fingers are turned from inside out in a shooting forward position. The action contrary to it is in the opposite direction : the hand and the fingers are drawn inward from forward position. It is known as *Parivarthitham.*

Be as it may, Kathakaḷi *mudras* are mundane in character. They are sixty-four, out of which twenty-four are *asamyukta.* It is quite possible to enlarge the vocabulary of the gestural language by developing 184 *mudras* representing about 3,000 words; but it is doubtful if a larger vocabulary will be conducive to the interest and needs of dramaturgy. To examine this question, it would be interesting to study the existing *mudras* first. The fundamental single hand poses are :

1. Pataka
2. Tri-Pataka
3. Kartarimukha
4. Ardhacandra
5. Arala
6. Sukatunda
7. Musti
8. Sikara
9. Kapittha
10. Katakamukha
11. Sucimukha
12. Mudra
13. Sarpasirrassu
14. Mrigsirsa
15. Anjali
16. Pallava
17. Mukura
18. Bhramara
19. Hamsasya
20. Hamsapaksa
21. Vardhamana
22. Mukula
23. Urnanabha
24. Kataka

PATAKA is formed by stretching all the fingers of the hand except the ring-finger which is bent inward the palm. According to Bharata all the fingers must be fully stretched. The hand is in the *abhaya mudra* position, with the thumb held erect touching the forefinger.

Pataka's origin is traced from mythology. Brahmanically it is Brahman's hand symbolizing victory. Its evolution in Kathakaḷi seems from the form of a flag fluttering on a temple. Old paintings give us a "V"-shape flag flowing on temple crests or minarets signifying the installation of a deity. The upper portion of such flags is bigger than the lower—the former standing for God and latter for the good earth. There is the sense of protection. Even a bridegroom's *Pataka* hand holds the bride's hand during marriage, thus promising to protect her and provide her. It has, therefore, a number of symbolic usages when either performed by one hand or by both. They are :

(*a*) Single :

Day, Walk, Tongue, Forehead, Body, Like or As, And, Messenger, Sandy and Sprout.

(*b*) Double :

Sun, King, Elephant, Lion, Bull, Crocodile, Arch, Creeper, Flag, Wave, Street, *Patal* (the underworld), Earth, Hip, Vessel, Palace, Evening, Noon, Cloud, Anthill, Thigh, Servant, Leg, Disc, Seat, Thunderbolt, Towngate, Building, Cart, Gentle, Crooked, Door, Pillow, Iron, Club, Surface of the foot, and Bolt.

TRI-PATAKA is formed when all the fingers are held upright, the thumb slightly bent inwards, thus touching the side of the forefinger. This hand pose has no single usage inasmuch as it is always shown by both hands. Its double usages are :

Sunset, Commencement, Halo, Drink, Body, Begging.

KARTARIMUKHA literally means the scissor's tip or mouth. By its very name and form, it is certainly of a later origin. Its secular purpose has given it divergent connotations. This hand pose formed by keeping the forefinger and the middle finger straight and bending the remaining fingers in the palm, the thumb resting on the ringfinger. Its usages are :

(*a*) *Single* :

Though, Word, Time, Gradation, We, Man, Mouth, Enmity, Boy, Mongoose.

(*b*) *Double* :

Sin, Fatigue, Brahmin, Fame, Pitcher, House, a Religious Vow, Purification or Purity, Bank, Dynasty, Bamboo, Hunger, Hearing, Act of Speaking, Multitude, End, Hunting.

ARDHACANDRA is literally the half moon and has Vedic origin for during that period elements were worshipped. Its later adoption was largely a matter of metaphor than religion. Here the forefinger and the thumb are straight while the remaining three fingers are slightly bent inward the palm Its usages are :

(*a*) *Single* :

Starting, Smiling, What ?, Self-praise.

(*b*) *Double* :

If, What ?, Helplessness, Sky, Blessed man, God, Remembrance, Grass, Man's hair.

ARALA : Its posture can be well-understood from the illustration. It has only double usages, namely :

Dull, Tree, Wedge, Bud, Sprout.

SUKATUNDA : Literally this hand is indicative of the head of a bird of the same name. It is a secular hand with regional affinity. It has only to be understood in the context of the attributes of the bird. In it, the forefinger is stretched and bent from the top, while the rest of the three fingers are curled in the palm, the thumb touching the middle finger. It is always shown by both the hands. It connotes the following :

Hand, Goad, Bird.

MUSTI : It is surely an ancient hand pose with the fingers curled in the palm and the thumb either resting over the forefinger or inserted between the middle finger and the ring-finger. Its usages are :

(*a*) *Single*:

In vain, Extreme or Excessive, Fie upon, Minister, Crossing, Enduring, Permission, Gift, Victory, Bow, We, Single sentence, Old age, Robbing, Food.

(*b*) *Double*:

Charioteer, Prefix, Loveliness, Holiness or Purity, Spirit or Ghost, Imprisonment, Deserving, Existence, Heel or Ankle, Attraction, *Chourie*, Yama or God of Death, Nude, Medicine (or herb), Curse, Swinger-Hammock, Gift, Circumambulation, Digging, Renunciation, Spear, Heroism, Sun or Fire, Vomiting, Giving birth, *Sudra*, *Yaksa*, Stick, Bow, Fight, Strength, Beauty, Singing, Negative.

SIKHARA or the peak is the hand in which the fore-finger is held erect, while the remaining three are bent in the palm the thumb resting on the middle finger. It connotes the following double hand usages :

Roaming, Legs, Eyes, Sight, Way, Search, Ears, Drink, Hands, Wonder, Time, Wheels.

KAPITTHA : It is a secular hand representing a wooden trap used in olden days. It is formed by holding the last three fingers erect and bringing the tip of the thumb touch the tip of the fore-finger in a circular shape. It has only double hand usages :

Trap or Rein, Doubt, Feather of a Peacock, Drink, Touch, Going Back (Recede), Outside, Back, Descending, Footstep.

KATAKAMUKHA : It is a *mudra* with dramatic bias. In it the forefinger is bent to touch the tip of the thumb and the middle finger is curled in the palm. The other two fingers are held upright separately. It has only the following double usages :

Coating, Servant, Hero, Wrestler, Shooting an arrow, Forest.

SUCIMUKHA : It is another *mudra* with a dramatic bias. It is the pointing finger hand. In it the forefinger is stretched upright with the thumb resting at its base. The remaining fingers are curled in the palm. Its usages are :

(*a*) *Single* :

Single, Alas !, Dull, Another, Plural, Hearing, A Digit of the Moon, Ancient, This One, Kingdom, Little, Witness, Giving Up, Come Thou, Go Thou, Fight.

(*b*) *Double* :

Broken, Jumping, Upwards, Word, Lakshmana, Fall, Mouth, Elsewhere, Eye-brow, Loose, Tail.

MUDRA is formed when the extremities of the forefinger and the thumb touch each other in a circular form while the other fingers remain stretched. Usages—

(*a*) *Single* :

Brahman (Lord of Creation), Veda, Tree, Sky, Chain, Rice, Heart, *Dhyana*, *Sruti*, Affection, *Raksasa* (Demon), Thinking, Desire, Self, Recollection, Knowledge or Wisdom, Creation, Life, *Swarga*, Equality, Defame, Future, Negative and the Fourth.

(*b*) *Double* :

Growth, Movement, Heaven, Sea, Thick or Dense, Forgetting, All Announcement, Thing or Object, Death, Meditation, *Janeyu* (the sacred thread worn by Brahmins) and Straight.

SARPASIRSA is the hood of the snake. It is the *Tri-Pataka* hand slightly bent. Its single or double usages are :

Sandal paste, Snake, Slowness, Sprinkle, Cherishing, Giving Water to God, Saint or Sage, The Flapping of Elephant's Ears, Massage of Wrestlers.

MAGASIRSA : It is the deer's head hand in which the middle finger and the ring finger are half bent in the palm and the remaining two are held erect. The thumb touches the extremity of the bent forefinger. It has only two single usages :

Deer and the Supreme Being.

ANJALI : This hand pose has religious origin. It is shown by both the hands, each touching the other from the side of the inside palm. The hands are held in *Tri-Pataka* with palms deepened slightly. It represents the following usages :

(*a*) *Single* :

Conch, Anger.

(*b*) *Double* :

Heavy rain, Vomiting, Fire, Stream, Vibration (Loud Noise), Brightness, Hair, Ear-ring, Heat or Sorrow, Confusion, Always, River, Bathing, Drinking, Flowing, Blood.

PALLAVA : It is a hand with "scattered" fingers born out of religious usage. It connotes the following :

(*a*) *Single* :

Distance, Leaf, Fume or Smoke, Tail, *Rattan,* Paddy.

(*b*) *Double* :

Vajra, Summit of a mountain, Ears of the cow, Length of the eye, Buffalo, Iron club, Spear, Horn, Circulating.

MUKURA : This hand pose is formed with the forefinger touching the tip of the thumb and the middle finger bent to touch the base of the thumb. The ring-finger and the fourth finger are held stretched apart. Its usages are :

(*a*) *Single* :

Enemy, Beetle, Ray, Anger, Neck, Excellent, Bangle, Armlet, Negative.

(*b*) *Double* :

Tusk or Fang, Separation, Part of the leg from the ankle to the knee, the buttock of a woman, Veda, Brother, Pillar, Mortar, Rapid or Violent, *Pisaca* (devil), Growth or Nourishment.

BHRAMARA : It is a secular *mudra* with the forefinger bent in the palm and the remaining three and the thumb held stretched upright. Its usages are :

(*a*) *Single* :

Gandharva, Birth, Fear, Weep.

(*b*) *Double* :

Feather, Song, Water, Umbrella, Ear of the Elephant.

HAMSASYA : It is a religious hand pose, literally the swan-beak. This is formed by bringing the forefinger and the middle finger of both the hands together and the remaining fingers and the thumbs are interlocked. Its usages are :

(*a*) *Single* :

The First Rain, Hair, The Line of Hair on the Abdomen, The three-folds of skin above the navel of a woman.

(*b*) *Double* :

Eye-balls, Soft, Dust, Pale, White, Blue, Red, Mercy, Tuft of hair or a line of hair on the abdomen.

HAMSAPAKSA : Hand is shown by fully stretching the hand, the forefinger slightly bent and drawn toward the thumb. It has the following usages :

(*a*) *Single* :

You, Sword, Wrath, Now, I, in Front, Axe, Flame, Call, Getting on the lap, Prevent.

(*b*) *Double* :

Moon, Cupid, Wind, *Deva* (Heavenly being), Mountain, Summit, Everlasting, Relation, Bedding, Rock, Enjoyment, Breast, Female Breast, Cloth, Conveyance, Falsehood, Lying down, Fall, People, Beating, Covering, Spreading, Founding, Coming, Bowing down, Bathing, Sandal Paste, Embracing, Following, Protecting, Reading, Mace, Cheek, Shoulder, Hair, Obedient, Blessing, Sage, Thus, Fish, Worship, Tortoise.

In its form and connotation, *Hamsapaksa* is a religious *mudra* and has its origin from the Brahmanic conception of gods' activities.

VARDHAMANA : A hand of secular origin and a challenge to *Sikhara*, this *mudra* is formed with the thumb outstretched and the fingers curled in the palm. Its usages are :

(*a*) *Single* :

A Whirlpool, Navel, Well.

(*b*) *Double* :

Ear-ring of a woman, Jewelled garland, Knee, A contemplating sage, Drum, Elephant, Driver.

MUKULA : Another secular hand originating from physical and mental attitudes, this hand is similar to the *Sarpasirsa* hand, the only difference being that the extremities of the thumb and the forefinger touch each other. Its single and double usages are :

Jackal, Monkey, Fading and Forgetting.

URNANABHA is a hand with a creeper's bias. If all the fingers and the thumb are relaxed downward, the hand gives the form of *Urnanabha.* It has the following double usages :

Horse, Fruit, Leopard, Butter, Ice, Abundance, Lotus.

KATAKA is a religious hand in content and form. In it the middle finger and the forefinger are bent inward the palm so that the former just touches the palm near the joint of the thumb while the forefinger and the thumb touch each other at their extremities the other two fingers remain extended. It is a gesture of communication or enquiry and is used to connote the following :

(*a*) *Single* :

Flower, Mirror, Female, *Homa* (a ceremonial offering to *Devas*), Sweat, Little, Who, Which or What, Quiver, *Surmi* or Fragrance.

(*b*) *Double* :

Vishnu, Krishna, Balbhadra, Arrow, Gold, Rama, Silver, a Female Demon, Sleep, Lady in Prominence, *Sri* or Wealth, *Vina*, Star, Garland, Lotus or Water-lily, Demon, Crown, Iron club, Particular, Chariot, With.

Apart from these single and double hand-poses, a number of hand combinations called *misra mudras* are used. Though these are double hand-poses, they are distinct from the previous two categories inasmuch as in it each hand holds a different *mudra*, but the combined action indicates a single object or idea.

In the above exposition of the single hand-poses, "double" usages are also indicated. When a *mudra* is used by a single hand, it is a single hand-pose. But when both the hands use the same *mudra* conjointly, the union of two hands indicates a Samyukta Mudras. Thus an idea or an object is expressed either by a single hand or by both. Maybe, the action of both the hands is separate and in both the hands the *mudras* held are one and the same. In certain cases, single hands are rarely used. Sukatunda, Kapithaka and Tripataka illustrate this point.

Combinations of single hand poses have yielded forty patterns in Kathakaḷi. Besides, there is a different formation for *Hamsa* (Swan). *Garuda* is also denoted by this hand. If in Garuda the pen fingers are closed and others opened in the same manner as in *Hamsa*; a "peacock" is represented. Tortoise is also differently represented.

Except for the needs of dramaturgy nothing can be said how the forty combined hand poses came in vogue in Kathakaḷi and why they connote particular objects; but it is true that they powerfully give the sense of a play. These *Samyukta mudras* are :

Anjali-Kataka
Ardhacandra-Musti
Hamsasya-Musti
Hamsapaksa-Pataka
Hamsapaksa-Musti
Hamsasya-Pataka
Hamsapaksa (Double)
Kataka (Variation)
Kartarimukha-Mudra
Kartarimukha-Musti
Kartari-Kataka
Kataka-Hamsapaksa
Kataka-Musti
Kataka-Sucimukha
Kataka-Mudra
Kataka-Mukura
Kartari-Kataka
Mrigasirsa-Hamsapaksa
Mudra-Pataka
Mudra-Musti

Mukula-Musti
Mukula (Variation)
Mudra-Pallava
Musti (Variation)
Pallava-Musti
Pataka Anjali
Pataka-Hamsapaksa
Pataka-Kartarimukha
Pataka-Kataka
Pataka-Musti
Pataka-Mukula
Pataka-Kartarimukha
Sikhara (Variation)
Sikhara-Musti
Sikhara Anjali
Sikhara-Hamsapaksa
Sucimukha-Anjali
Vardhamana-Hamsapaksa
Vardhamana-Hamsasya

ANJALI-KATAKA is formed by the combination of the hands in *Anjali* and *Kataka*. It indicates *Yagya* (holy sacrifice).

ARDHACANDRA-MUSTI is the combination of two hands in *Ardhacandra* and *Musti* and indicates moon at the zenith of the sky.

HAMSASYA-MUSTI stands in representing the lover or any object of love.

HAMSAPAKSA-PATAKA indicates "agreeable to mind."

HAMSAPAKSA-MUSTI is used in representing *Yaksa* (holy sacrifice).

HAMSASYA-PATAKA helps in connoting the idea of *Kavya* (prosody).

HAMSAPAKSHA (with both hands) indicates Monkeys, Hanuman, and the allied animals.

KATAKA in all its variations indicates womanhood.

KARTARIMUKHA-MUDRA indicates the son or the grandson.

KARTARIMUKHA-MUSTI essentially stands for indicating *Vidyadhara* (celestial being).

KARTAR-KATAKA is used to indicate science.

KATAKA-HAMSAPAKSA is so exhibited as to indicate mother, or a body-in-waiting.

KATAKA-MUSTI indicates the following : widowhood, cohabitation, fight, Sri Rama and gift of a woman.

KATAKA-SUCIMUKHA indicates the daughter.

KATAKA-MUDRA is the symbol of truth, *Dharma* (religion).

KATAKA-MUKURA represents a handsome lady.

KARTARI-KATAKA represents a virgin girl.

MRIGASIRSA-HAMSAPAKSA hand is used for Siva, the Natraj.

MUDRA-PATAKA indicates 'a mark.'

MUDRA-MUSTI stands to connote the father, and the *Senapati* (Commander-in-Chief).

MUKULA-MUSTI connotes "that which is to be done"; wife and marriage.

MUKULA (Variation) means the bud and indicates the "end".

MUDRA-PALLAVA helps to connote the "hard device."

MUSTI (Variation) indicates destruction.

PATAKA ANJALI, as the name indicates, is the combination of two hands in *Pataka* and in *Anjali* and represents the usage of play or pastime.

PATAKA-HAMSAPAKSA stands to represent Brahma, the Lord of Creation.

PATAKA-KARTARIMUKHA when used indicates the prince.

PATAKA-KATAKA is used to indicate the "residence" and the "cow".

PATAKA-MUSTI represents killing and hindrance.

PATAKA-MUKULA stands to represent the heroes of *Ramayana*, viz., Sugriva, Bali, and Angada.

PATAKA-KARTARIMUKHA represents the town, and Ravana, the king of Lanka (in *Ramayana*).

SIKHARA (Variation) meaning the peak, indicates Garuda, the bird in *Ramayana.*

SIKHARA-MUSTI is used in indicating Indra, the God of *Devas* (celestial beings).

SIKHARA-ANJALI represents Sri Vatsa (the mole on the breast of Lord Vishnu).

SIKHARA-HAMSAPAKSA indicates "the middle" (course).

SUCIMUKHA-ANJALI is used to indicate a "picture".

VARDHAMANA-ANJALI stands to connote precious stones.

VARDHAMANA-HAMSAPAKSA indicates the "nectar".

VARDHAMANA-HAMSASYA is used in indicating the nether lip.

Each of these *mudras* connote one or more than one object. In plural representations, the hand pose has different positions for different objects. For a correct interpretation of these *mudras*, their formation and usages should be learnt only from an expert and a skilled teacher.

MUDRAS

In permuting the hand pose, each *mudra* has a different placement. Similarly, if one and the same *mudra* is interpolated, different meanings may be expressed at such a stage, the hand poses are called Samana Mudras, for example, the hand poses which help to indicate lake and water, sea and sea-god, night and darkness and youth and bright. Here one thought is elaborated to cover the thought of the same kind. Where there is no definite hand pose for a personal noun, the Kathakaḷi actor takes the aid of Kartari Mukha Mudra which is held level to the mouth and moved forward slightly.

Every *mudra* has three functions—Karta, Karma and Kriya, each representing the subject, the instinctive character and the particular action respectively. It is the Mudra Dharama, for example if an elephant is to be described, the Kathakaḷi actor holds the hands in Pataka, they create some movements to describe the animal high lighting, its instinctive actions and finally amplifies the stylized behaviour, the actions that the animal is required in a story to complete. How the *mudras* imitate, describe or symbolise objects, concrete or abstract, can be understood in a performance, examples of a few are given below :

For representing the bow and the arrow, the left hand is held in Musti as if it is holding the bow, and the arrow is represented by the right arm held in a different *mudra.* Shoot is rendered by holding the left hand in Kataka Mudra close to the heart and the right hand, mudrakhya held touching the fingers and the former hand. This hand is raised in level to the forehead and changed to Hamsapaksa thereby finally suggesting truth. In creation, the left hand is held in Tripataka close to the navel which suggests creative power and the right hand is held over it in mudrakhya. Repeating the sequence as in truth, this hand is finally held by Suci suggesting rise or creating fulfilment. Similarly, there are hand poses for heaven, gold, husband and wife. Heaven is shown by the hands held in Tripataka at a level of the forehead. The palms are inward but the face is tilted upwards, eyes suggesting bliss. In this too the fingers change their pattern to Mudrakhya. Gold is symbolized by both the hands held in Kataka followed by imitative movements of a test-rubbing on the touchstone. The hands for the wife and the husband have a sensuous appeal in them.

Mukula and in the case of the Bharya, is placed inside the right hand held in Musti. For the husband "*Ballabha*" the thumb of the Sikhar-hand is held by the right hand held in Musti. Hand movements have a certain dignity in the scheme of bodily gestures. Sakha is the name given to these movements, though the fingers and the hands flow in different directions as they are released for varied formations. In enacting a theme, the display of fingers in a different hand pose has come to stay as an important factor in pantomime.

CHAPTER IX

PHYSICAL ATTITUDES

TALKING of physical postures suitable for both *Tandava* and *Lasya* patterns of dancing, the *Natya Sastra* describes *Karanas*, *Angaharas* and *Recikas*. A number of *Karanas* in successive display produce an *Angahara*, and two or more *Angaharas*, when successively exhibited, produce a *Recika*. Bharata deals with 108 *Karanas*, 32 *Angaharas*, and four *Recikas*. They are :

A—KARANAS

1. Talapuspputa.
2. Vartita.
3. Valitoruka.
4. Apvidha.
5. Samnakha.
6. Lina.
7. Swastika Recita.
8. Mandla Swastika.
9. Nikutta.
10. Ardha Nikutta.
11. Katichchinna.
12. Ardha Recita.
13. Vaksha Swastika.
14. Unmatta.
15. Prasta Swastika.
16. Swastika.
17. Dwika Swastika.
18. Allata.
19. Katisam.
20. Akspta Recita.
21. Viksiptasiptaka.
22. Ardha Swastika.
23. Ancitan.
24. Bujangtrasita.
25. Urdhva Janu.
26. Nikuncita.
27. Matalli.
28. Ardha Matalli.
29. Recita Nikutta.
30. Padapavidhakam.
31. Valita.
32. Gurnita.
33. Lalita.
34. Dandpaksha.
35. Bhujangtrasta Recitam.
36. Nupur.
37. Vaishaka Recitam.
38. Bramaram.
39. Catura.
40. Bhujangancita.

41. Danda Recita.
42. Vrashckakuttana.
43. Katibranti.
44. Latavrashcka.
45. Chinna.
46. Vrscke Recita.
47. Vrshcka.
48. Vyansita.
49. Parsvanikutta.
50. Lallattilak.
51. Kranta.
52. Kuncta.
53. Ckramandalam.
54. Uremandala.
55. Aksipta.
56. Talavilesita.
57. Argela.
58. Vikshipta.
59. Avrtta.
60. Dollapada.
61. Vivratta.
62. Vinivrtta.
63. Parakwakrant.
64. Nishmbhita.
65. Vidubhdranta.
66. Atikranti.
67. Vivartita.
68. Gajakridita.
69. Talasanafotita.
70. Garudapluta.
71. Ganda Suchi.
72. Parivrtta.
73. Samuddishta.
74. Gradhavalina.
75. Samnata.
76. Suchi.
77. Ardha Suchi.
78. Suchividhan.
79. Apakranti.
80. Mayura Lalita.
81. Sarpita.
82. Dandpada.
83. Harinapluta.
84. Prendkholita.
85. Nitamba.
86. Iskalita.
87. Karihasta.
88. Prasarpita.
89. Sihanvikridita.
90. Sinankarsita.
91. Udvr-ttan.
92. Upasrata.
93. Talasanghattita.
94. Janitan.
95. Avahittha.
96. Nivesha.
97. Ilakakridata.
98. Urudvt-tan.
99. Madaskhalits.
100. Vishnukranta.
101. Sambrhanta.
102. Vishkambha.
103. Udhattita.
104. Vrashbhakridita.
105. Lolita.
106. Nagapsarpita.
107. Saktasya.
108. Gangavatarana.

B—ANGAHARAS

1. Isthara Hasta.
2. Paryastaka.
3. Suci Vidha.
4. Apavidha.
5. Akshipta.
6. Udhattita.
7. Vishkamba.
8. Vishkambhapasrata.
9. Aparajita.
10. Mattakrida.
11. Swastika Recita.
12. Pasehwa Swastika.
13. Vrashcika.
14. Bhramara.
15. Mattskhalita.
16. Mada Vilasita.
17. Parivaratta Recita.
18. Vaishakha Recita.
19. Paravrtta.
20. Gati Mandala.
21. Parichinna.
22. Alataka.
23. Parashwacheda.
24. Viddudhdranta.
25. Udavratta.
26. Allira.
27. Recita.
28. Achurita.
29. Akshipta Recita.
30. Sambhranta.
31. Apasarpa.
32. Ardha Mikutta.

C—RECIKAS

1. Pada Recikas
2. Kati Recikas
3. Kara Recikas
4. Kantha Recikas

These physical attitudes underwent considerable modification, pruning and sifting before some of them were accepted within the folds of the characteristic needs of Kathakaḷi.

In the physical postures and movements of the body, arms and fingers of a Kathakaḷi actor, the sculptural motif of Kéraḷa icons and their ethos are finely brought out. The Malayali art, with many dramatic concepts inspired by Puranic legends and a wealth of imagery, has, as well, afforded an endless material for the study of figures in action and movement. These limbs of human expressions, combined with a thin attitude of the mind of the character, are responsible for the growth of a highly formulised and cultured gestural language.

In all big temples of Kéraḷa, images of many gods in stone or metal are set up with a principal one or the presiding deity in the centre. An image of Parvati or Bhagvati also accompanies these. These images are either *Sattvika*, *Rajasik* or *Tamasik*.

(I) *Sattvika* images are of the God who sits in meditation in the posture of a *yogin* with hands held in the *mudra* of benediction or of granting boon to or blessing a votary. He is Brahma, surrounded by Indra and other gods, all in the prayful and worshipful poses.

(II) *Rajasik* images are of Vishnu seen seated on a *vahana* or vehicle adorned with various ornaments. His hands hold weapons, and also grant boon or blessing.

(III) *Tamasik* images look terrific and fearful. They are several armed figures fighting and destroying demons. Śiva and his consort, Durga, are modelled thus.

In the case of female figures, the type most common in Kéraḷa sculptures is that of a young matron with her breasts like a pair of golden gourds and hips like the swell of a river bank.

Inspired by these postures, Kathakaḷi has developed six fundamental poses employing six basic hand actions, called *Nrtt Hastas*. They are:

(I) *Lata Hasta*, i.e , the hand hanging down;
(II) *Nidrit Hasta*, the sleeping hand;
(III) *Kati Hasta*, i.e., the hand touching the hip;
(IV) *Dhanurdhari Hasta*, viz., the hand holding a bow;
(V) *Alingana Hasta*, that is, an embracing hand; and
(VI) *Gaja Hand*, viz., the hand resembling the proboscis of an elephant.

Besides these, there are eight poses based on *mudras* or actions of the fingers, called *Nrtya Hastas* of dramatic value. They are:

(I) Kataka Hasta,
(II) Kartaṛi Hasta,
(III) Simhakarna Hasta,
(IV) Patak Hasta,
(V) Tri-Patak Hasta,
(VI) Suchi Hasta,
(VII) Ardhacandra Hasta, and
(VIII) Gyana Hasta.

These fundamental poses assist a dancer-actor to bring out various physical attitudes correctly.

These fundamental poses owe their origin from such of the sculptural images which depict the attitudes of Gods. The development of *Tāntrism* lend considerable colour to image-making. Some spiritual significance was attached to these, and in the daily religious life they played an important part. The use of half-moon as a headgear of *Śiva*, the introduction of Maharaja-Lila pose and Dhyana Mudra pose for the Buddha and the grant of Ahlya Mudra pose to deities granting benediction largely influenced formulation of different physical attitudes. Human emotions and behaviours in a normal life were coordinated with artistic activities. From these developed a number of secular poses, such as a pose for "I am" of "enough of it". How the Kathakaḷi actor behaves in portraying these situations can be well understood if the normal human behaviours are observed. In "I am" the actor takes both the hands cross-wise in front of the breast and raises the eye-brows keeping the glance straight. When he raises the left foot, he adds egoistic dignity. Full of bright and egoism he raises the right arm above the head and the left arm is pulled in *Lata Hasta* parallel to the ground. But in the self-conceited "I", the left arm is drawn a little above the navel held in Arala. The formations of the hands, however, differ from a posture to posture. Normally both hands rather in an Hamsapaksa shape are stressed. The Kathakaḷi actor takes both the hands slightly near the waist palm facing at a 45° angle, the audience expresses full satisfaction. His eyes are rolled down to the nether eyelid.

In some measure it can be said that Kathakaḷi postures fall within three categories; impressionist, expressionist and descriptive. Where abstract ideas are to be projected, the physical attitudes are impressionist as conceived by the great masters. Objects portrayed in Kathakaḷi are transcribed into an appropriate expressive posture which picturise them. But where objects or situations lend themselves into narrative sequences, the Kathakaḷi actor employs descriptive postures. These largely constitute a quilt of gestural fragments consolidated into one. The lotus and the bee, for instance, are described by an actor simultaneously through a pivotal gesture. In the repertoire of Kathakaḷi's physical gestures not more than eight Karanas are employed generally.

SATTVIKABHINAYA

(*Emotional Action*)

If angikabhinaya is the skeleton of Indian dancing, *sattvikabhinaya* is the life-force. It is the latter action which enlivens a performance. Solely associated with the actions of the eyes, and supplemented, where necessary, by the actions of the other minor limbs (*pratyangas*), emotional experiences are delineated with a force that has often re-written the history of Kathakaḷi.

CHAPTER X

AESTHETICS

EACH dance gesture is accompanied with some *bhava*, the ultimate climax is a *rasa*. *Rasa*, literally the essence, may be explained in simple terms as the aesthetic outcome of moods in a relishably enjoyable form. In the art parlance it is the aesthetic sentiment. *Bhava* is an accessory mood of *rasa*. It is aesthetic emotion.

According to Bharata's *Natya Sastra* (Chapter VI, verse 15) there are eight *rasas*. But Abhinayaguptacharya, the great Sanskrit Indologist and commentator on the *Sastra*, mentions nine *rasas*. His view has been accepted by Sarangdeva in *Sangit Ratnakar*.

The ninth *rasa* is *Santa* (tranquil), which gives a stance perhaps not so much used in Indian dancing, except in some cases, because it lacks, apparently, dynamic character. It has no place in any lively acting or dancing. Its characteristics are—peaceful, devotional and ethereal. Although it has lesser chances for use in dancing, Kathakaḷi has given it an appropriate place.

In Kathakaḷi, *Santa rasa* is exhibited by holding the chin slightly upward, contracting the eyes, rolling the eye-balls evanescently upward. The hands are kept in *dhyana mudra*. The pose suggests return to inward realisation or meditation after a hectic activity or communion with the self. It marks the conclusion of all emotions.

Other eight varieties of sentiments are *Sringara* (Erotic), *Hasya* (Comic), *Karuna* (Pathetic), *Raudra* (Furious), *Bhayanaka* (Terrible), *Vira* (Heroic), *Vibhatsa* (Disgust) and *Adbhuta* (Marvellous).

SRINGARA reflects feelings associated with eroticism bordering sensuousness. It is a *creative* sentiment, for it lies at the root of every creation. In expressing this sentiment eye-brows, eyes, lips and cheeks accompanied with a fascinating pose of the hand come into play. It is the guiding sentiment of the *lasya* (dancing) —a dance with erotic movements performed by women.

HASYA is literally expression of humorous situations, but it is also used to express ridicule or contempt. It is exhibited by curving the eyebrows and shrinking the eyes. The neck and head are also shaken jerkingly.

KARUNA is pathos. The eyes are contracted a little and eyeballs are held steady in pathos. The head is tilted on either side.

Soka (grief) is classified under *Karuna*. It is a variant of pathos. When the eyes are contracted and lips are lowered and intermittently quivered, it is *Soka Bhava*.

RAUDRA literally means furious. It is an expression of excessive anger combined with ferocity. The eyes are open wide and the eyeballs are held in the middle with a fierce and piercing look; cheeks throb while the teeth rub and chatter.

BHAYANAKA is the term for "terrible". It is expressed by widely opening the eyes and constantly moving the eyeballs sideways. Both the hands are folded and kept on the breast.

Guru Gopinath, whose illustrations of *nava-rasa* appear in this book, explains *rasas* thus :

SRINGARA (Amorous) has *Rati* (love) as the principal mood. It is shown with a side-long glance, and by slightly moving the eyebrows with a smile and gladdening the face.

HASYA (Contempt), whose principal mood is *Hasya* (indifference), is expressed by raising the eyebrows, drawing back the eyeballs, shrinking the nose and eyelids and gladdening the face.

KARUNA (Compassion) is an expression of grief (*Soka*). The eyes are dropped down without effort, the nose is still, the cheeks are dragged down, the neck is bent to right and left slowly and the face is held in *Syamavarna* (pale).

RAUDRA (Wrath), the principal emotion of which is anger (*Krodha*), is interpreted with a straightforward powerful look, full open eyelids, upraised full curved eyebrows, nostrils dilated, lips trembling with jaws tightly set, and a red face.

BHAYANAKA (Fear) has, as its principal mood, *Bhaya* (fright). In it the eyebrows are intermittently raised one after another and then both at a time, the eyes are opened wide, the eyeballs are moved sideways casting glances right and left, the lips are withdrawn inward, the nostrils are widened, the cheeks tremble and the neck is turned both sides. The colour of the face changes from yellow to red.

VIRA (Valour) is the ultimate essence of *Utsaha* (heroism), exhibited with full open eyes, stretched eyelashes, raised eyebrows and cheeks, and a red face.

VIBHATSA (Disgust), whose principal mood is *Apprakrita* (unbearable attitude), is shown thus : drawing the eyeballs inward; the eyebrows downward; nose shrunk; dropping cheeks; neck downward; natural colour of the face.

ADBHUTA (Wonder) has *Ascarya* (surprise) as the principal mood. In it, both the eyebrows are raised gracefully, looking gradually forward. The eyelids are stretched sideways and the cheeks and neck slightly forward. Besides, a gladdened face is held.

SANTA (Serenity), the principal mood of which is *Samyamana* (calmness), has the following form : head and neck in natural pose, looks upward through the eyebrows, and eyelids half closed.

VIRA expresses heroic deeds, valour and such other emotions. In it the eyes are wide open and eyebrows raised, the neck and face are held erect.

VIBHATSA : Disgustful scenes arouse the sense of grotesqueness. In this the facial expression undergoes a peculiar change. The eyes and eyebrows are contracted, hands extended—palm facing the audience, and the breast is held sunken a little.

ADBHUTA exhibits the sense of wonder. It is shown by the quivering of the eyebrows accompanied with the nodding of the neck and head. The eyes are adjusted in accordance with these movements and the lips are thrown out a little.

Bhavas help *rasas* in completing the "sense" of an "action" performed during the course of a dance piece. A particular sentiment is produced through the interplay of auxiliary and principal emotions. Emotions are produced when the body and the mind come into complementary action. Three classes of *bhavas* are produced. *Sattvika* feelings are associated with the physical life of man like perspiration. *Manasika* emotions are those which arise out of the feelings produced in the process of some action of the mind like madness. *Saririka* feelings are concerned with the body in action like raising of a stone.

Owing to physical manifestations in the actions of *Sattvika Bhava*, it is intimately related to *Saririka Bhava*. Actions are performed by limbs which, in turn, exhibit a certain emotion classed as *Sattvika*. The cause of "motionlessness", for instance, is the immovability or the stationary condition of the limbs. "Immovability" is *Saririka Bhava*, while "motionlessness" is *Sattvika Bhava*.

A stone is lifted. This action is *Saririka*, but the question is : Why is the stone lifted ? Acting depicts that due to fury the actor lifts a stone. Here "fury" is associated with "anger". It is a case of *Raudra rasa*. The stone is thrown, and while doing so the man trembles. The actions of "lifting" and "throwing" are examples of *Saririka bhava*, while "trembling" (the result of throwing) is *Sattvika bhava*.

Sattvika Bhava has been classified as below :

Stambha (motionless), *Sweda* (perspiration or sweat), *Romanch* (horripilation), *Swara-Bhanga* (coarseness in voice or voice beyond tune or pitch).

Kampa (tremble), *Vaevarnya* (sentimental change of the colour of the face), *Rudrana* (shedding of tears), *Pralaya* (destruction), and *Yamaii* (yawn).

The brain commands the performance of an action. What the action is ? and how it is determined ? are the questions associated with the brain; hence *Manasika bhava.* The *Isthai Bhava* (the principal emotion) and *Vyabhicari Bhava* (the accessory mood of the principal emotion) together produce *Manasika Bhava.* The cause of the principal emotion is termed *Vibhava,* and the action performed as a result of the principal emotion is technically known as *Anubhava.*

The above exposition of *rasas* and *bhavas* form the following episode from the *Mahabharata* :

> Kauravas, the opponents of Pandavas, killed Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna. On hearing this, Arjuna flared up in anger and his eyes were blood-red and arms throbbed. In the meantime Jaidratha kicked Abhimanyu who was lying unconscious in the battle-field. Arjuna felt this and the flame of his anger blasted.

In the above piece, the principal emotion is "anger" (*krodha*) of Arjuna (hence, *Isthai Bhava*); the cause of this anger, i.e , the determinant, is the murder of Abhimanyu (a case of *Vibhava*); the "action" of anger is the reddening of Arjuna's eyes and his preparation for war—hence *Anubhava,* and, finally the action of the accessory mood of the principal emotion "anger" is the degraded action of Jaidratha who kicked unconscious Abhimanyu—it is *Sancari* or *Vyabhicari Bhava.* The combination of these four *bhavas* produce *Raudra Rasa*—since "fury" is associated with "anger".

Summing up, it is the principal emotion which suggests a particular *rasa. Isthai Bhava* is the "beginning" of, or the first stage to achieve, some aesthetics; *Rasa* is the final form of aesthetics achieved.

Each *Isthai Bhava* has an equivalent *rasa.* The following table gives the equivalents :

Isthai Bhava (Principal Emotion)	*Rasa* (Sentiment)
1. *Rati* (love)	1. *Sringar* (erotic)
2. *Hasya* (mirth)	2. *Hasya* (comic)
3. *Soka* (sorrow)	3. *Karuna* (pathetic)
4. *Krodha* (anger)	4. *Raudra* (furious)
5. *Utsaha* (courage)	5. *Vira* (heroic)
6. *Bhaya* (fear)	6. *Bhayanak* (terrible)
7. *Jugupsa* (aversion)	7. *Vibhatsa* (disgustful)
8. *Ascarya* (wonder)	8. *Adbhuta* (marvellous)
9. *Sama* (quiet)	9. *Santa* (tranquil)

Vibhava is that determining factor of human feeling which gives form to *Isthai Bhava.* It is of two types, viz., *Allamban,* i.e., the principal factor, and *Uddipana*, the accessory factor of *Allamban.* In *Sringar rasa,* for instance, the principal factor is *Naika* or *Nayak* (heroine or hero) and the accessory factor of *Allamban* is *Aikantavasa* (loneliness) and *Cadani* (moon-light). *Uddipana* has four characteristics, viz., *Guna* (quality), *Cesta* (desire), *Allankar* (costume), and *Tatasta* (nature's limitations).

The *Guna* of *Nayak* and *Naika*, the *Allamban Vibhava* of *Sringara rasa* is their youth, radiance and character; the *Cesta* is their desire to enjoy the honeymoon; the *Allankar* is their costumes, ornaments, etc.; and the *Tatasta* is the full-moon, gentle breeze, etc.

Mention has also been made in Sanskrit texts of the varieties of natural emotions (*Swabhavika bhavas*) of man. These natural feelings are thirty-three in number and are associated with the natural consequences and reactions of the state of mind or body ranging from the birth to the death of man. They are :

Smriti (remembrance)
Allasya (laziness)
Sanka (doubt)
Cinta (anxiety or care)
Srama (effort or labour)

Marana (death)
Avega (hurry)
Garva (pride)
Vikhada (gloom)
Autsukya (curiosity)

Glani (self-reproach)
Nidra (drowsiness)
Moha (attachment)
Mada (rapture or ecstasy)
Nirveda (desperate)
Asuya (detachment)
Denya (generosity)
Jadata (obstinacy)
Drati (forbearance)
Vrida (progress)
Ugrata (rapidity)
Trasna (thirst)
Harsa (pleasure)
Capalta (suppleness)
Apsmara (fits)
Supti (sleep)
Vivodha (knowledge)
Vitarka (logic or counter discussion)
Amarsa (anger)
Avahitha (rivalry)
Mati (opinion)
Unmada (mental derangement)
Vyadhi (trouble or malady)

These feelings are natural because they are voluntary conditions of man's temperament. In the ordinary course of the day, man experiences all these, or a part of these, emotions in the satisfaction of some of his desires, or, as a result of some incident or happening.

In pantomime there is a harmonious blending of these various *bhāvas* to give rise to *rasas* in representing a meaningful "action" or movement. The dancer absorbs himself in the representation of the character in whose disguise he is to bring to life an apparent reality. *Sāttvikabhinaya* as this part of the dance is called, is the soul of Indian dancing, for without a proper exposition of emotional attributes the story of the play will remain abstract and appealless.

CHAPTER XI

EXPOSITION OF MOODS

Aesthetical moods are the recognised nine principal causes of human emotions. They develop, according to a systematic scientific processes, in the human behaviour and in accordance with the nature of the particular human being. In the natural man, any or all of these are created in a normal process of harmony or disharmony between the heart and the mind. He may not make extraordinary gestures to manifest his feelings, but when these very feelings are stylized for exposition in a work of art, they adorn an exterior mantel. How best the sophiscated, stylized mood in a role-type can approximate with the human emotions, determines the dynamic effect of the moods expounded. In the earlier tradition of the Kéraḷa stage, the Cākkyars achieved that high water-mark which today is a legend. *Nayanābhinaya* or the "action of the eyes", as it is called in the Cākkyārs' terminology was developed to the highest degree of human achievements on the stage and was borrowed by Kathakaḷi with a sincere effort though with lesser effect. To achieve this state, the earlier teachers of Kathakaḷi required their pupils to observe different situations and, while executing a particular one, to *experience* it if he wanted to communicate it to the audience effectively. Mere virtuosity was no merit nor perfection in their tradition. The actor was required to learn the art and to apply the brain. If, for instance, someone saw a beautiful woman like whom one had never seen before, what would be the emotional condition ? The answer is provided by the legend wherein, at the first sight of the all-beautiful Sītā, Rāvaṇa is stupefied. The Cākkyārs, therefore, introduced the instinct of stupefaction at the sight of a thing of beauty. In their repertoire, *Pānadrūpa Rasāyana*, Rāvaṇa is stilled by the ravishing beauty of Sītā at his first sight of her and he drinks the all-beautiful with his eyes.

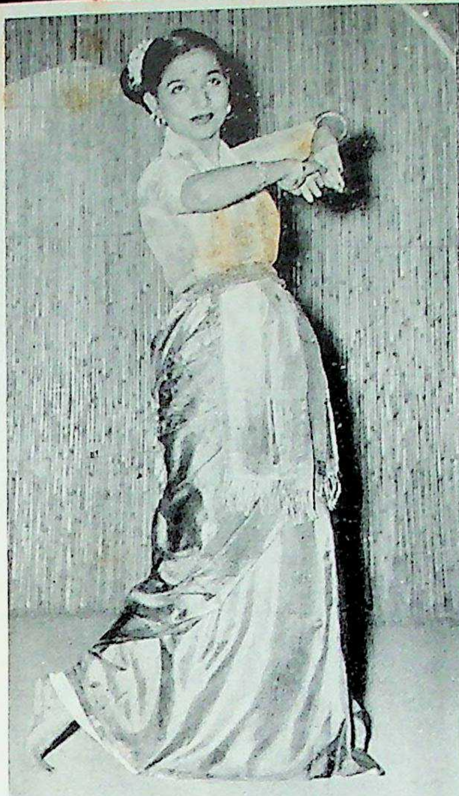
There are many such incidents in which the role of the eyes to delineate aesthetical situations is all-important. In *Agṅi-Śalabha,* the moth is consumed by the flames of the fire—an action entirely created by the eyes. It is no easy a task to master the expressions of the eyes and, therefore, a Kathakaḷi actor is given the freedom to show his ingenuity. Before any action takes place, the mind creates emotions and directs the hands to make appropriate gestures and the eyes to follow those gestures to ultimately paint the picture of the principal emotion. The wherewithal and the culmination of the emotions are provided by the mind and executed by the eyes in four successive stages, the preliminary, the subsidiary, the secondary and the final (*Anubhāya*, *Vibhāya*, *Sañchārībhāya* and *Isthāībhāya*). *Añgikābhinaya* and *Nayanābhinaya* go side by side, though the latter dominates; the actor may "look" at the *Pada* or song, an action called *nōkki-kanuka*. He takes the visual impression of the scene which is the determinant factor (called *Vibhāva*) and which leads to the consequent (technically called *Anubhava*). The actor has now placed himself in the position of the role-type and he feels certain "consequence" which urge an outward manifestations or which is an excitant (that is, *Uddīpana*). All through this, the song is weaved into music and the actor transcribes it through a gestural language, when the excitant causes spread themselves out to envelop the mental frame of the character. There arises the *Sañcāribhāva* and the actor creates a number of actions leading to the rise of dominant emotions (*Isthāībhāva*) which, in turn, culminate in *rasa.*

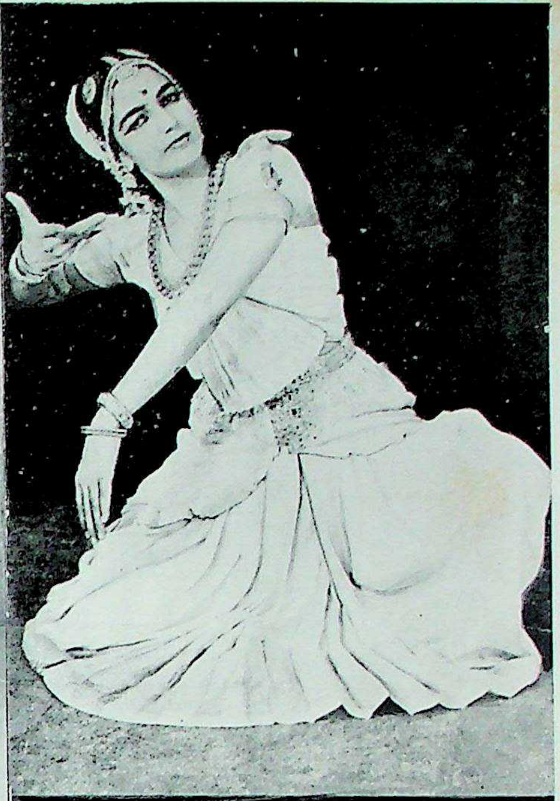
Of the *rasas*, *Sriṅgāra* is the *rājarasa* or *adirasa* and call for a delicate display of the roles of Nāyak and Nāyakā (hero and heroine). In love scenes, called *Patiñjāṭṭams*, there are, in addition, secondary male and female characters called *Upnāyak* and *Upnāyakā.* They help in developing *Sringārabhāva* : *Rati.* These scenes are of sufficiently long duration and are highly poetical and romantic. They call for much more specific a treatment than in the case of other *rasas*.

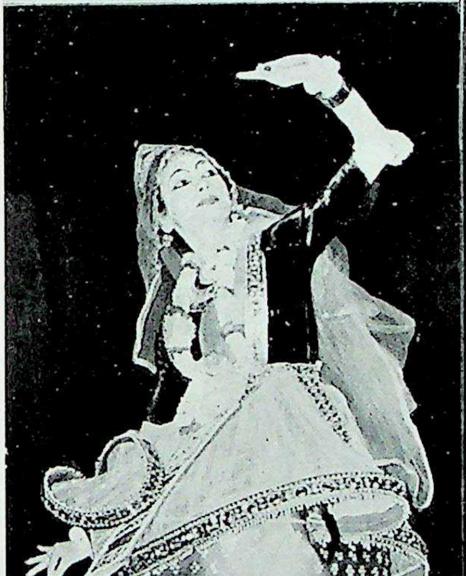
How dramatic are the scenes ? The curtain is wrung down. The Nāyak and the Nāyakā are seen in an amorous state, each tenderly trying to merge the personality into or to identify oneself with the other. The left hand of the Nāyak is held protectingly and caressingly over the crown of the Nāyakā. His right hand holds her in a gentle embrace. The Nāyakā clings to him confidently and gracefully. They stand at an angle of about 45 degrees; each attracts the other's glances. They gaze. Their glances are activated. They endear each other. Passions are deepened. The Nāyak has a steady gaze. The Nāyakā is timid and bashful. She has suppressed passion, which is sprinkled with delicate glances of dedication, wonder and subjugation. The arched eyebrows move like the rhythm of the waves. Both execute lovely postures and graceful movements. They create a tender atmosphere all around. These amorous actions are much more dramatic in content and form than those found in *Bhārat Nṛtya* (miscalled *Kathak*) of Northern India, where the Nāyak and the Nāyakā assume a state of playfulness to execute the maturity of the sentiment. The Northern India dancer is one entity to depict the role of both the characters. What goes up to the state of *Isthāībhāva* is the *Kṛīḍā* (playful action) of the two characters, mostly Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and what emerges as the finale of these actions is the rapturous delight of communion exhibited by unusual flighting digressions in rhythm.

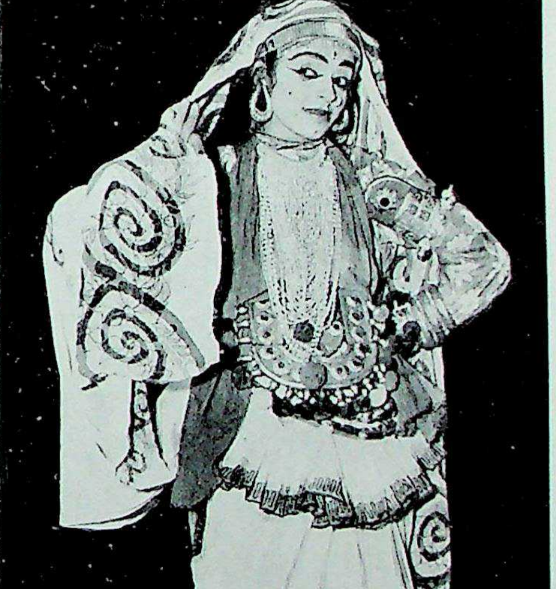
As in *Bhārat Nṛtya*—but unlike its approach—in Kathakaḷi too one single sentiment is delineated differently by different types of characters. Rāvaṇa, for instance, expresses persuasively and thumpingly his burning passion for the unresponsive Rambha. He is seductive and tempts his object. He is insistent and relentless, though rejected. He is distressed and he exercises his prowess. *Sṛingāra rasa* thus can be of many patterns, like *Vīra-Sṛingāra*, *Bībhatsasṛingāra* and *Sānt-Sṛingāra*. Similarly, if *Vīra rasa* is the central sentiment for exposition by different characters, it may be *Bhayānak-Vira*, *Karuna-Vīra* and *Bībhatsa-Vīra*. The state of sentiment differs as well from the age of the characters.

Now, take a scene of conflict. There is military preparation. The weapons are being inspected in the armoury and tested for their efficiency. The sword is taken out of its sheath and its edge is caressed delicately and confidently. The string of the bow and

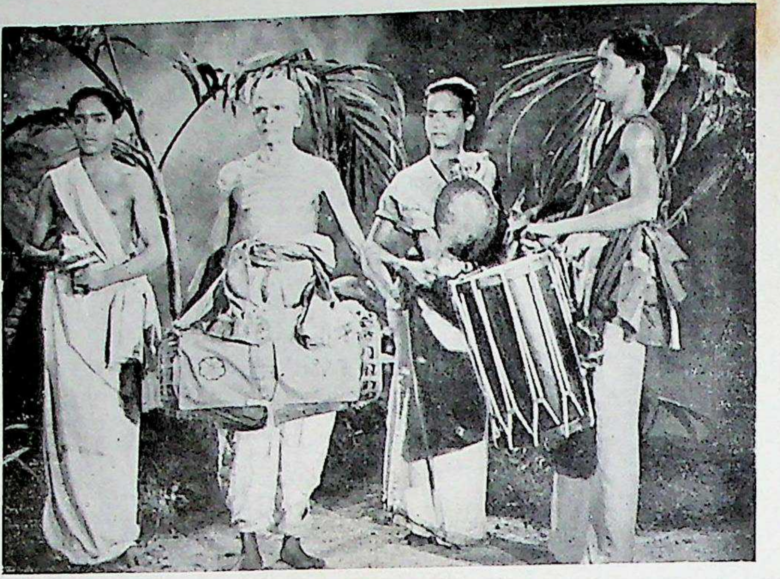






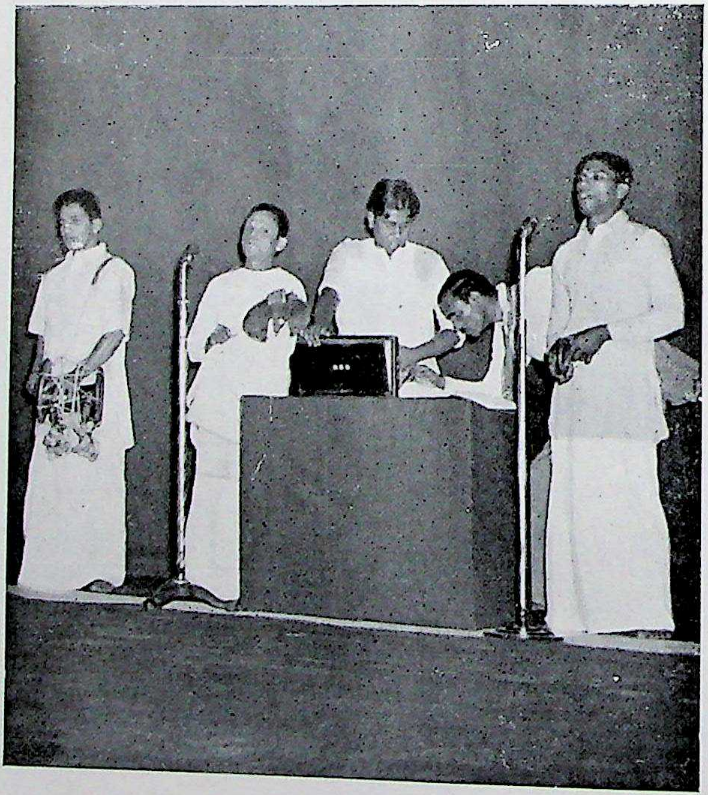


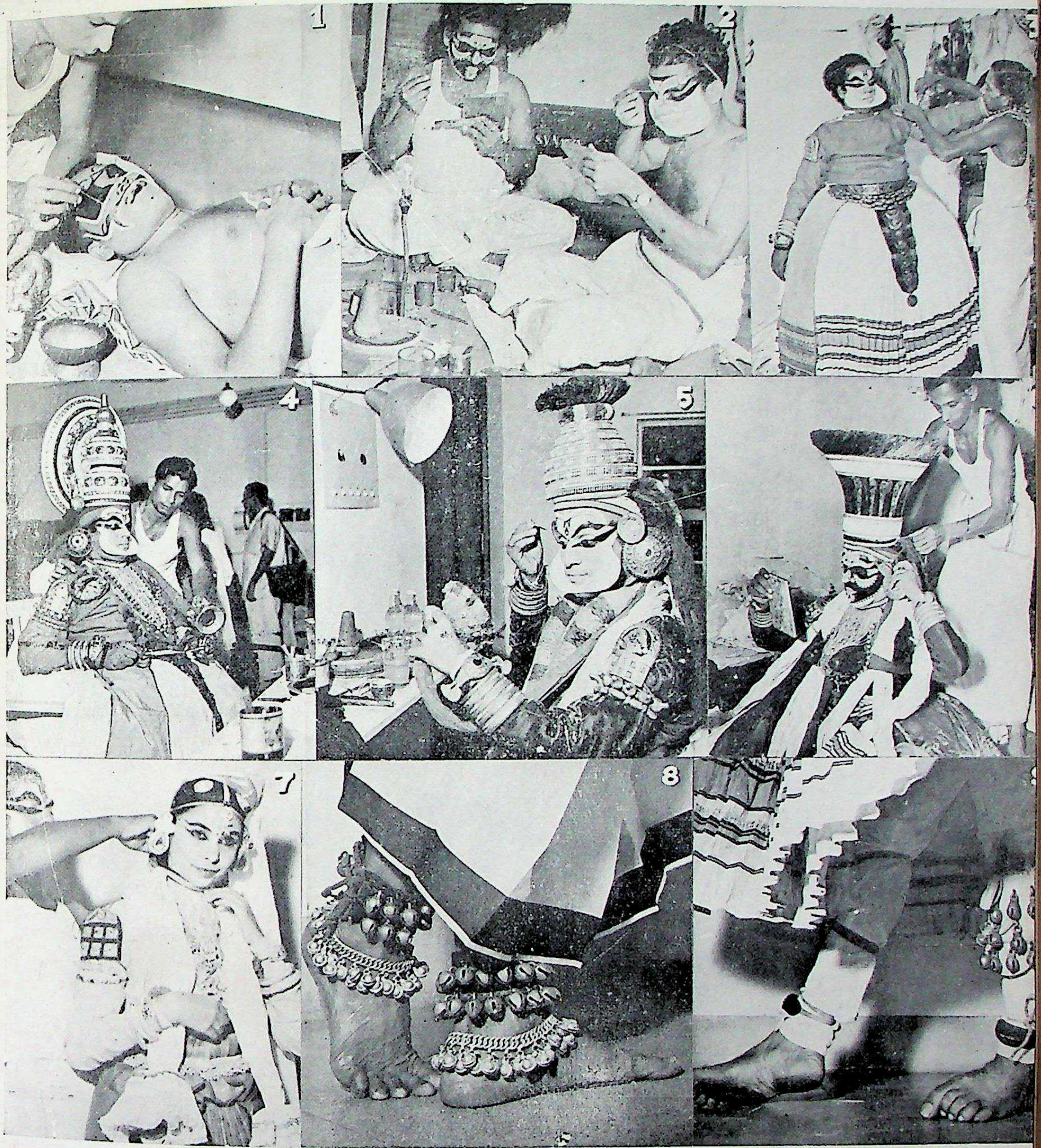
Top left : Kumari Sundari Chiblani in the Bharat Nritya stance for *Thaat*
Top right : Shrimati Rukmini Devi in a characteristic Bharatnatyam pose
Bottom left : Kumari Paul in a Manipuri Dance pose
Bottom right : A Kathakali actor from Kerala Kala Mandalam in the pose of a *Stri*



Kathakali—The Orchestra

Kathakali—The musicians including singers

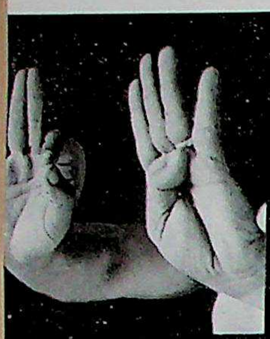
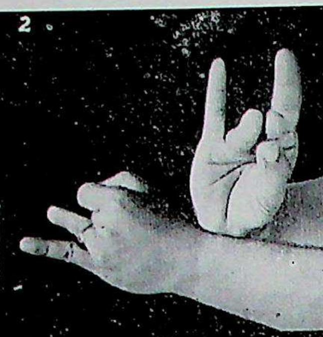
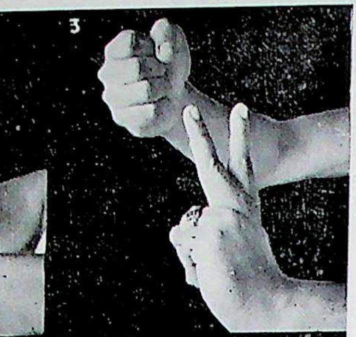




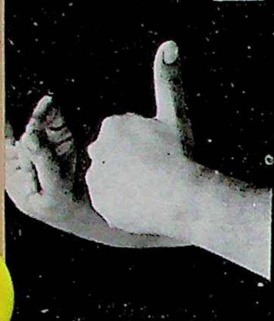
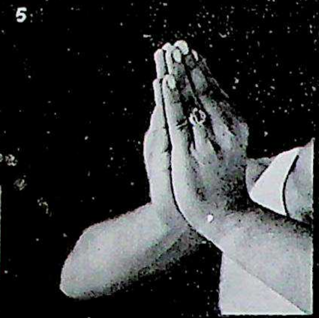
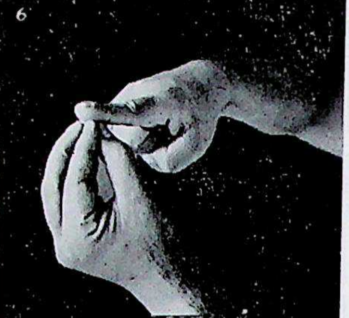
Kathakali Make-up

DOUBLE (INCLUDING MIXED)

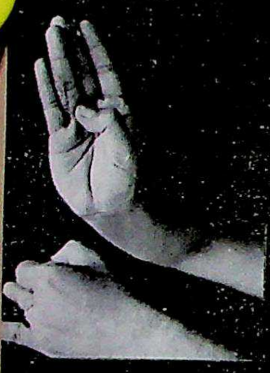
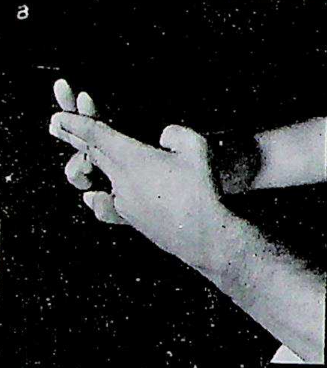
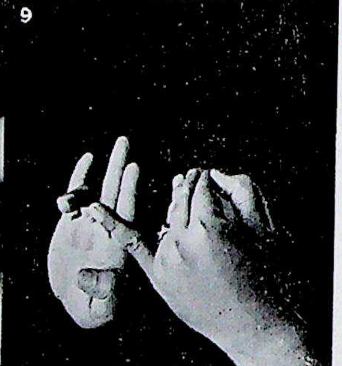
(N.B.—In case of mixed *mudras*, the hand-pose by the right

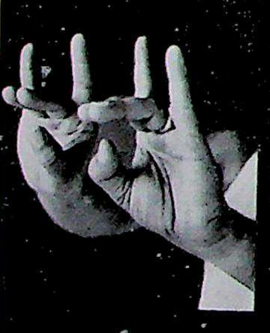
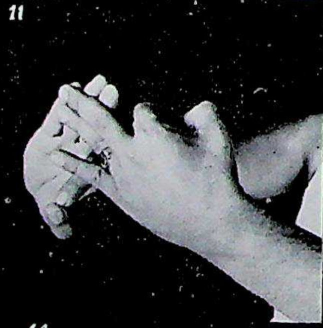
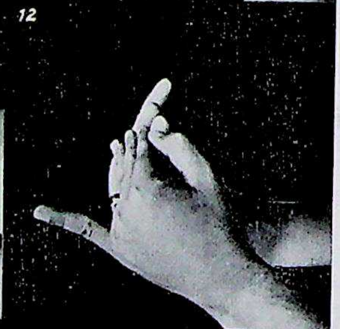
1. Brahmā
   (Mudrākhya-Pallava)
2. Pārvatī
   (Mṛgaśirsa-Katakam)
3. Indra
   (Muśti-Śikharam)

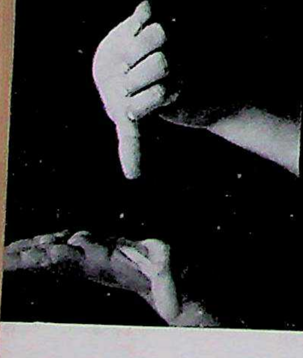
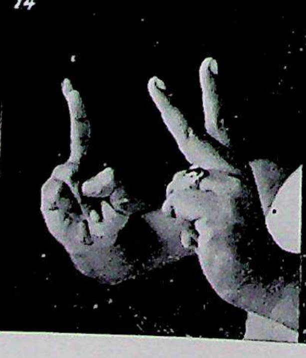
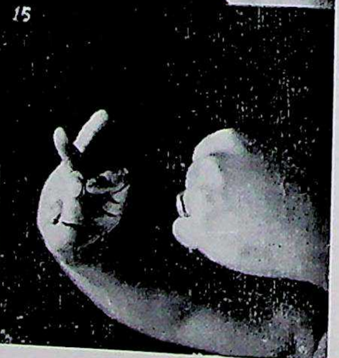
4. Śri Rāma
   (Muśti-Katakam)
5. Namaskār
   (Añjalis)
6. Pāndavas
   (Sucimukha-Mukula)

7. "Satya" or Truth
   (Pallava-Katakam)
8. Reason
   (Kāpithas)
9. Duryodhana
   (Patāka-Kartarimukha)

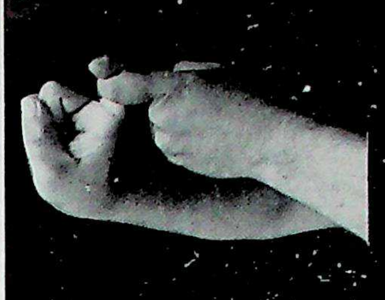
10. Me
    (Mukurams)
11. Brother
    (Mudrākhyas)
12. Sin
    (Kartarimukhas)

13. Poison
    (Vardhamānaka-Hamspakśa)
14. Seeing
    (Śikharams)
15. Fight
    (Muśti-Katakam)

hand is stated first; that by the left hand follows it with a hyphen.)

16. Definite
(Ṣukatundas)
17. Chariot
(Katakams)
18. Cakrā
(Patakas)

16

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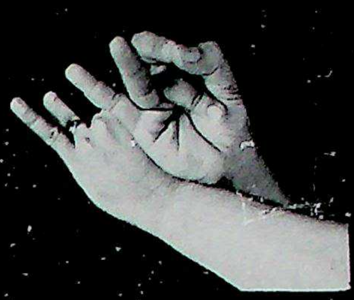
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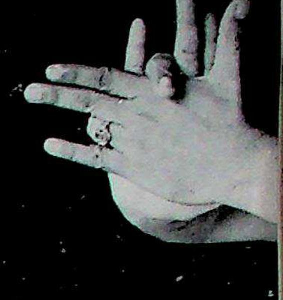

19. Killing
(Patāka-Muśti)
20. Sky
(Ardhacandras)
21. "Priya" or beloved
(Hamsāya-Katakam)

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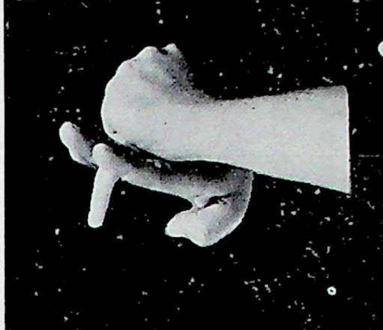
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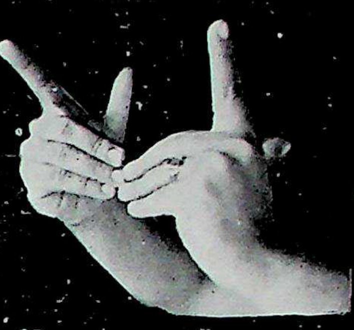
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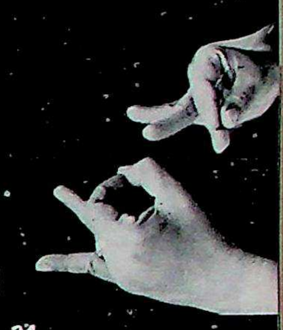

22. Beautiful girl
(Kataka-Mṛgśirsa)
23. Soft
(Hamsāsyas)
24. Lotus
(Urnanābhas)

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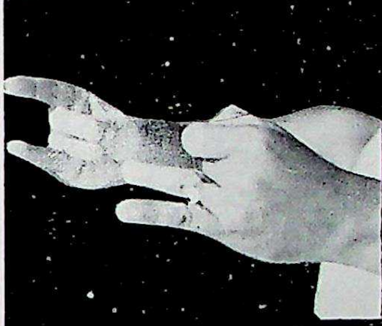
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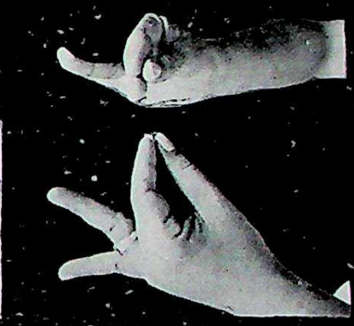
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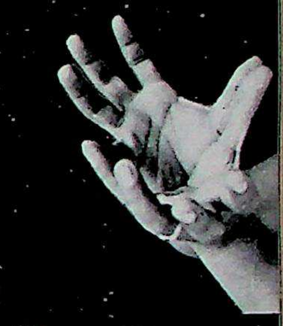
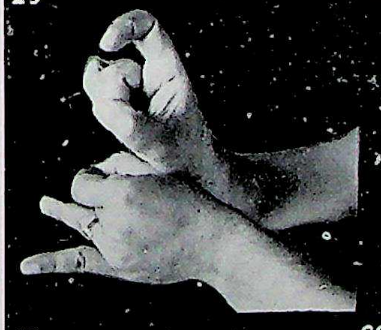


25. Koyil bird
(Katakas)
26. Marriage
(Mukula-Muśti)
27. Wife
(Kartarimukhas)

25

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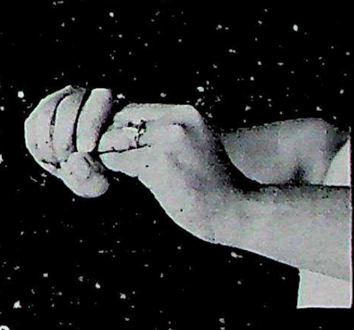
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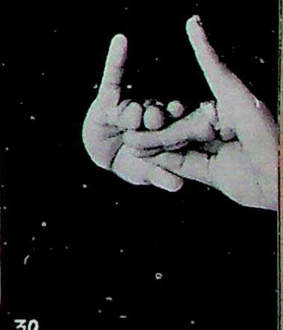
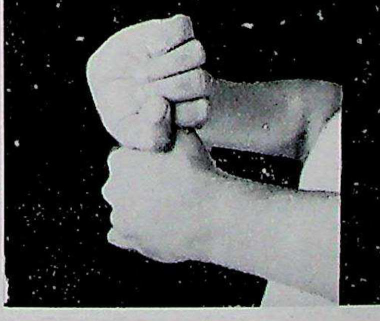


28. Husband
(Muśti variations)
29. Tortoise
(Patakas)
30. Lion
(Patākas)

28

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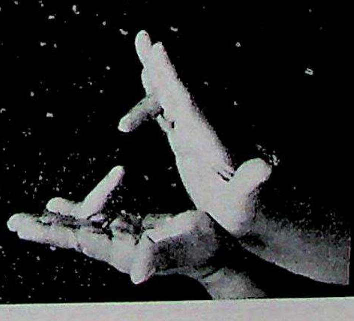
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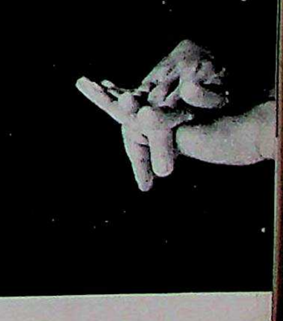
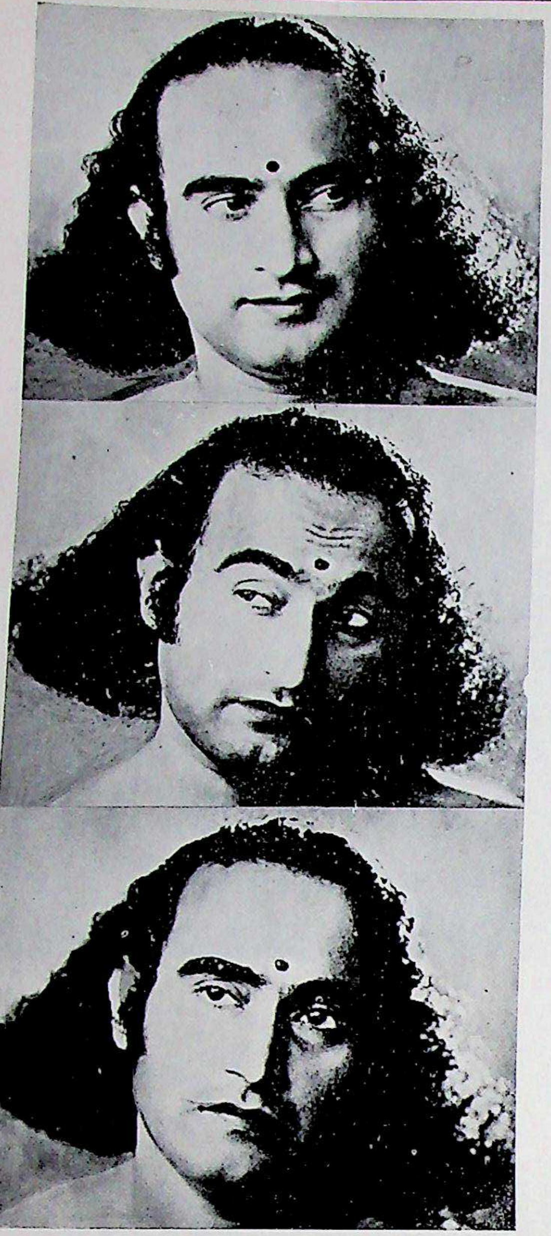
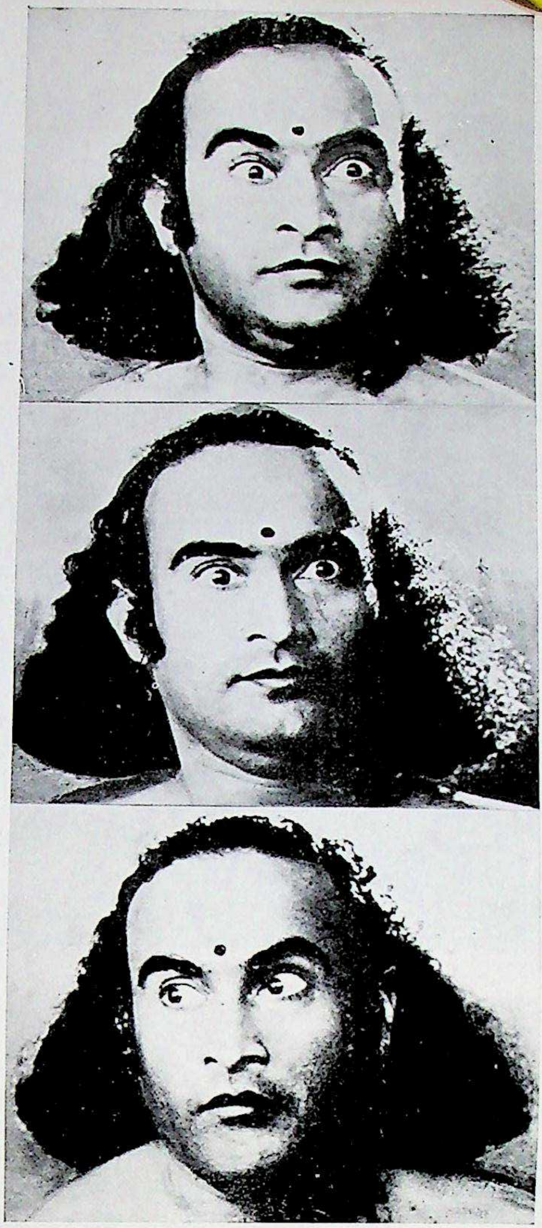
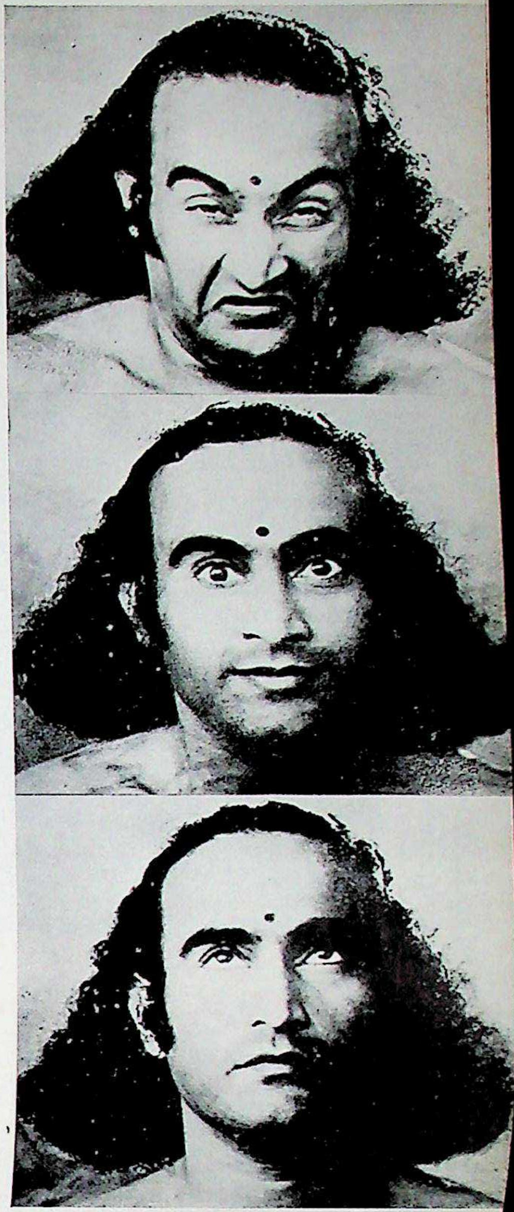




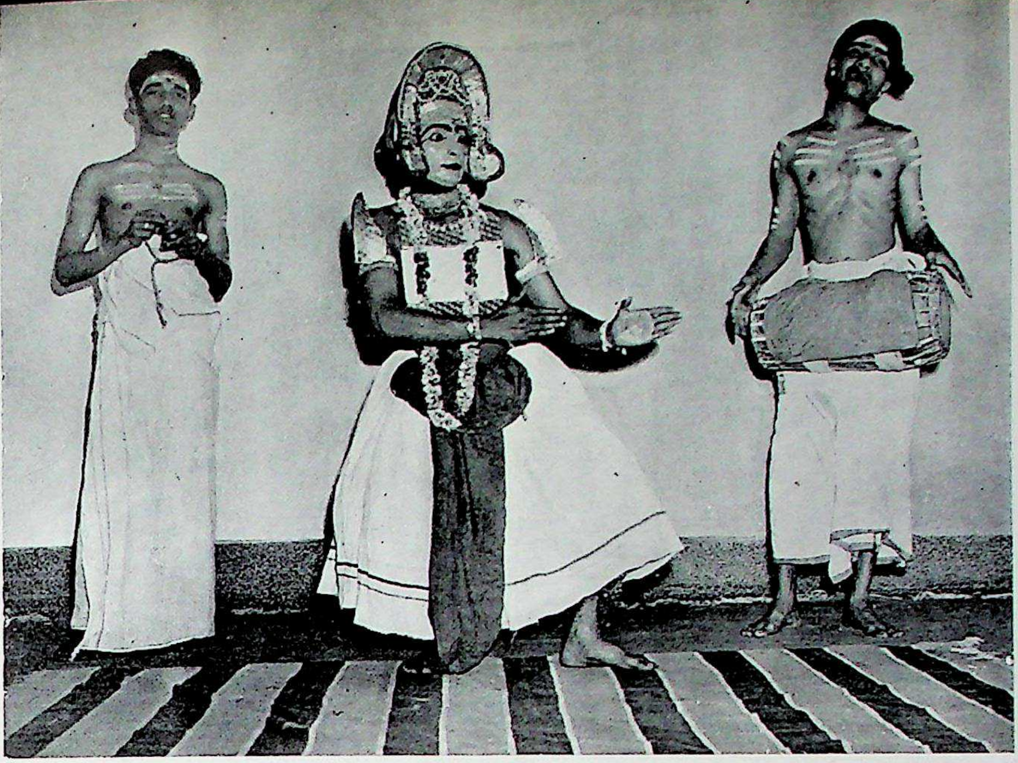
Top : Sringār (Amorous)
Centre : Hāsya (Contempt)
Bottom : Karuṇa (Compassion)



Top : Rauḍra (Furious)
Centre : Vīr (Heroic)
Bottom : Bhayanaka (Fearful)

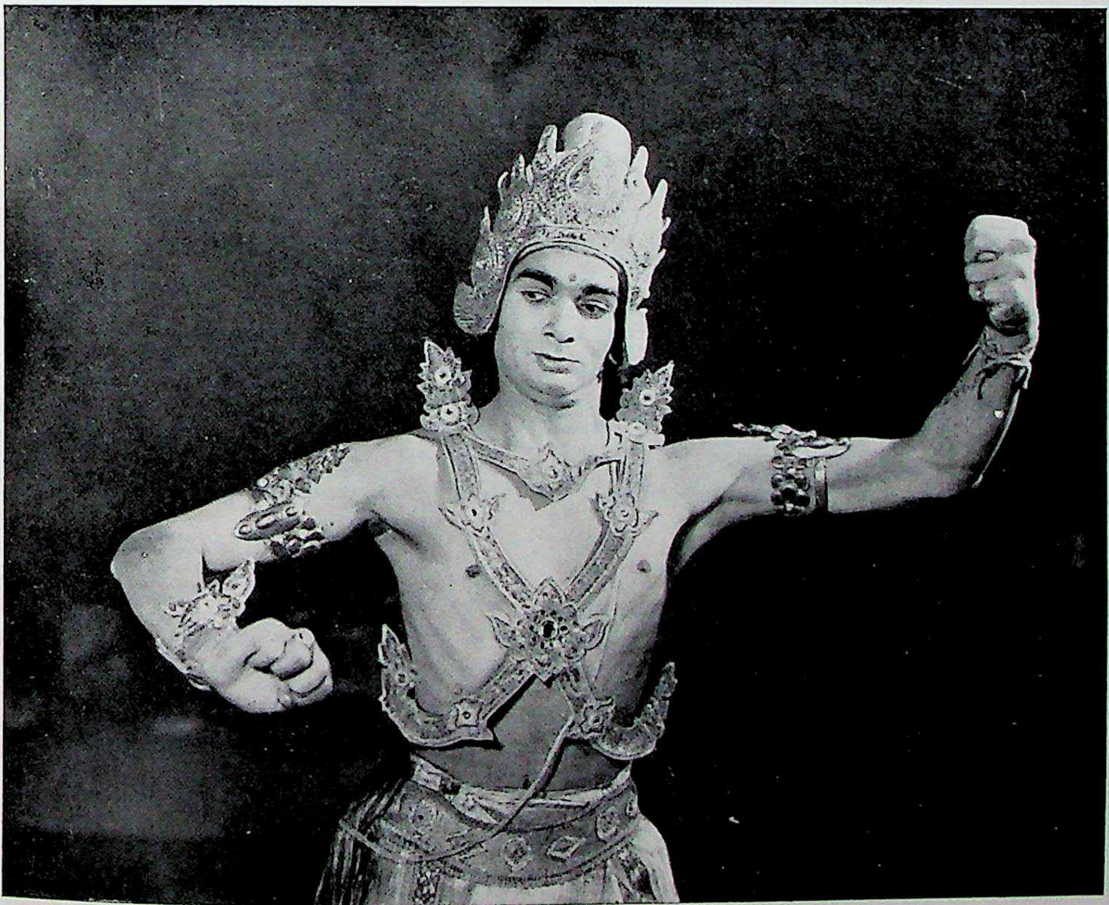


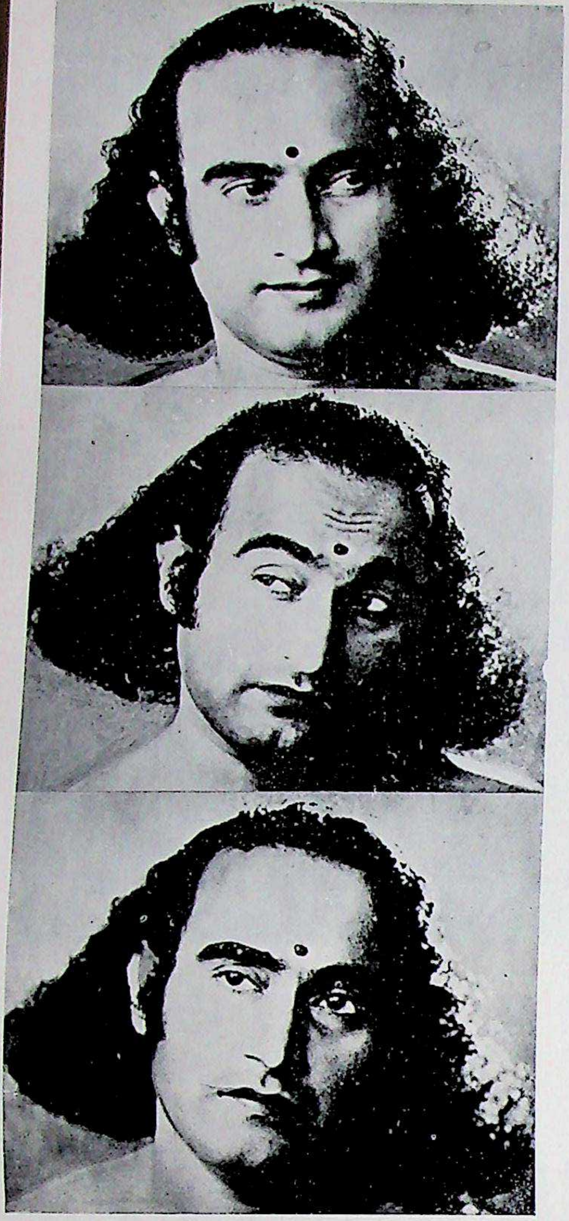
Top : Bibhatsa (Repulsion)
Centre . Adbhut (Wondorous)
Bottom : Śānt (Serenity).



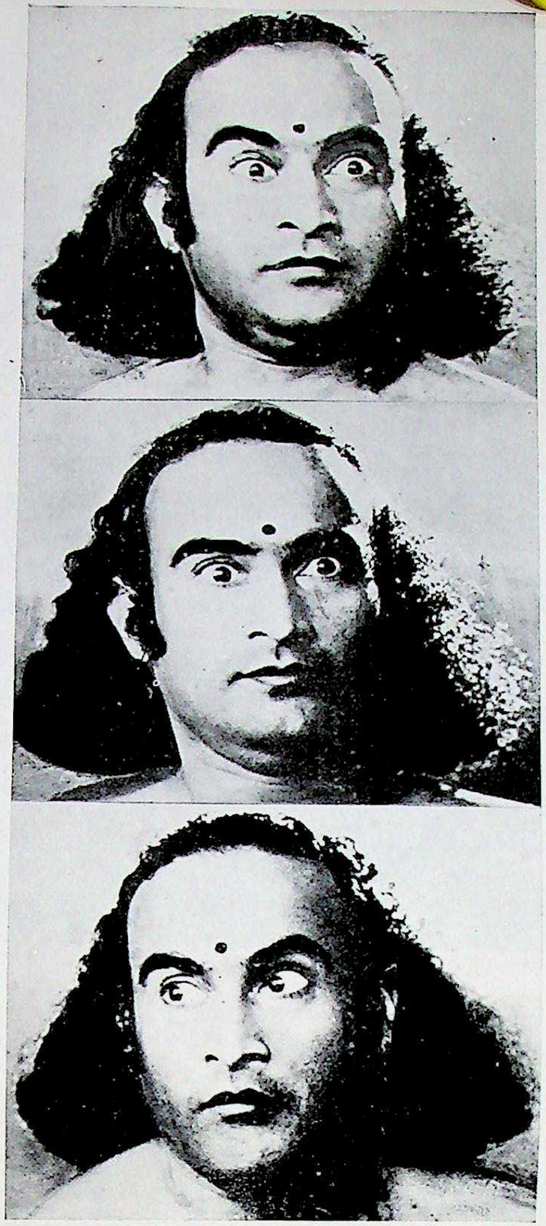
THULLAL—The progenitor of Kathakali

KARTIKEYA (Uday Shankar)

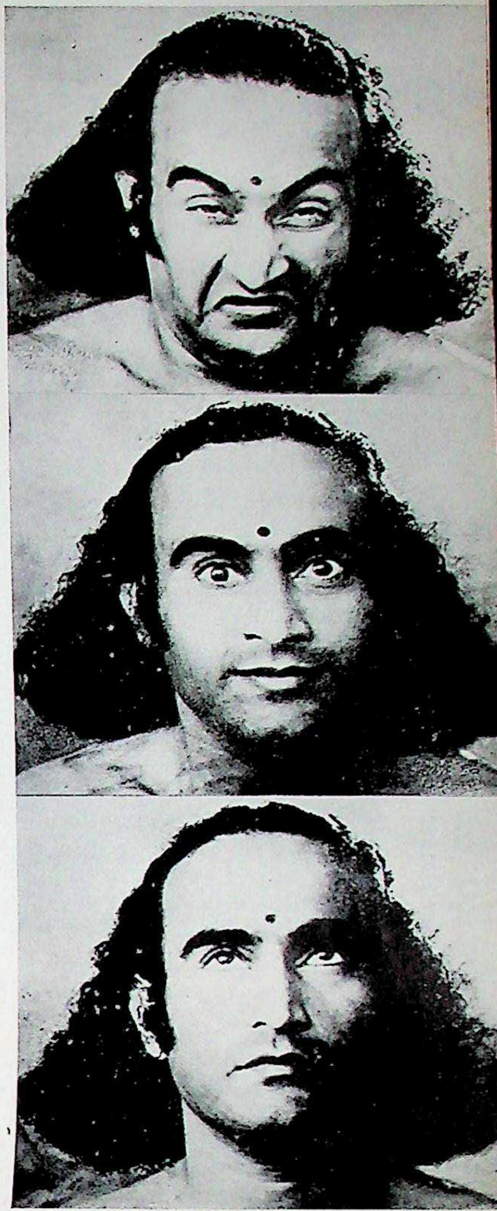




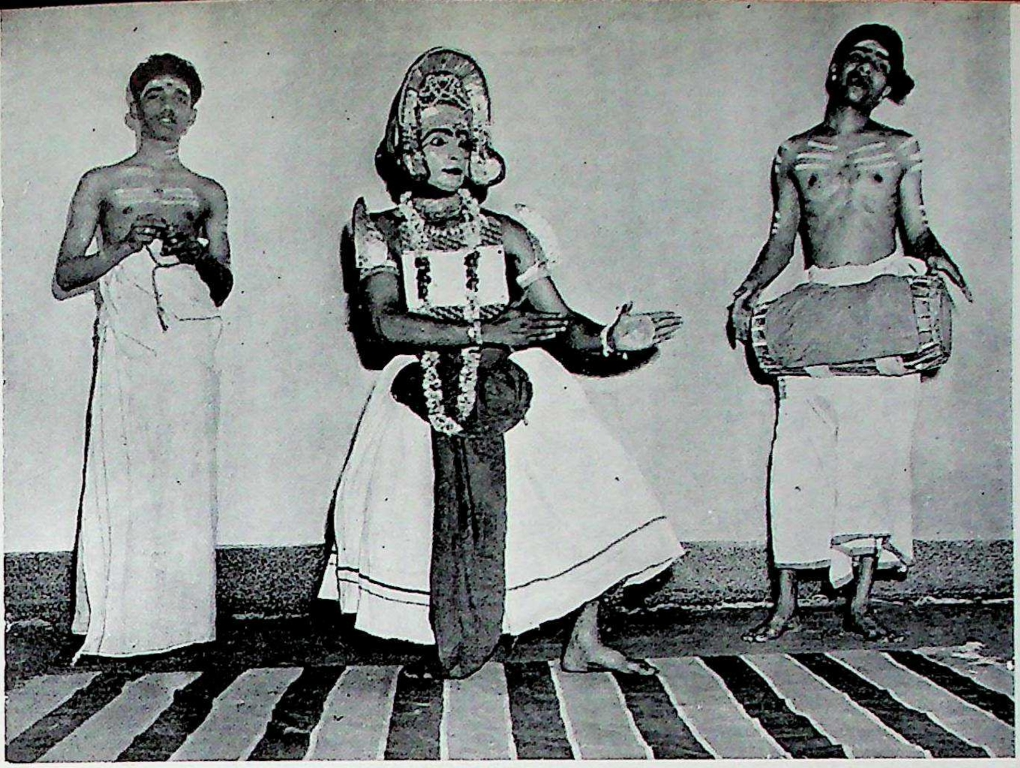
Top : Sringār (Amorous)
Centre : Hāsya (Contempt)
Bottom : Karuṇa (Compassion)



Top : Rauḍra (Furious)
Centre : Vīr (Heroic)
Bottom : Bhayanaka (Fearful)

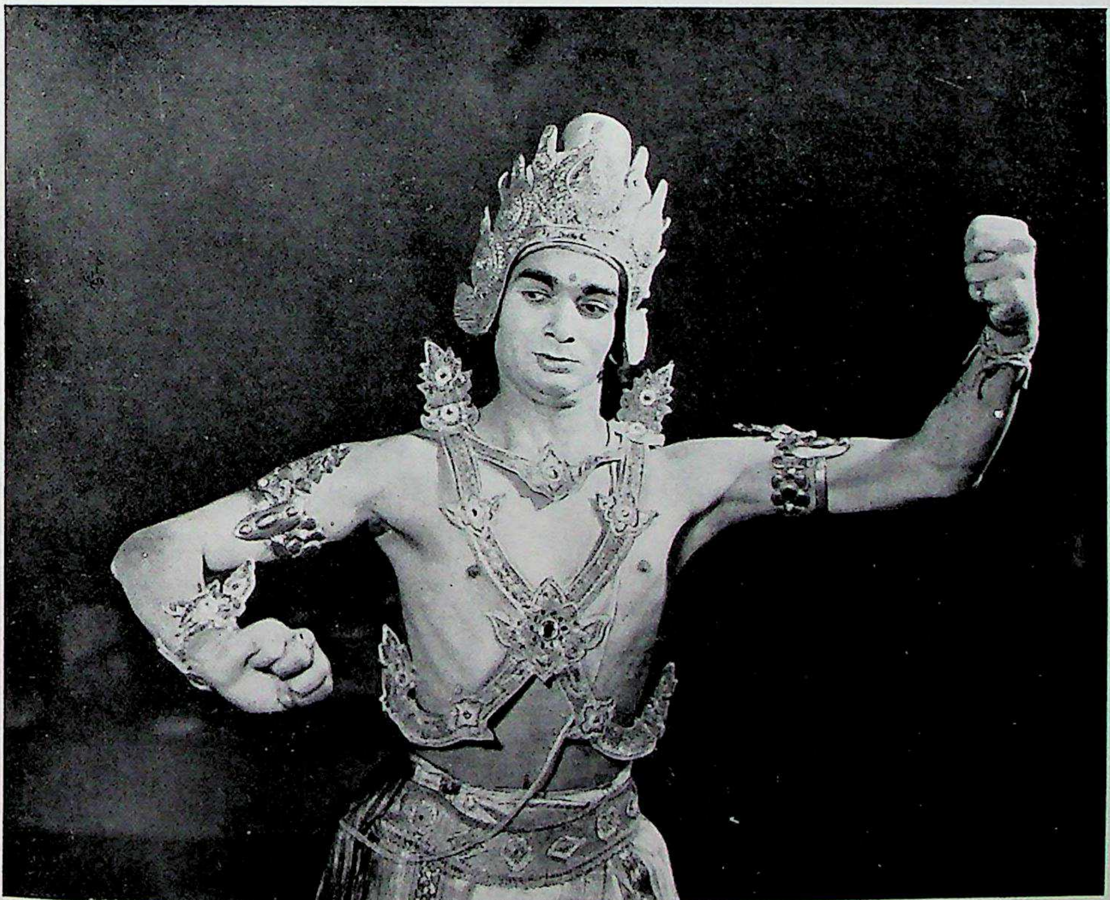


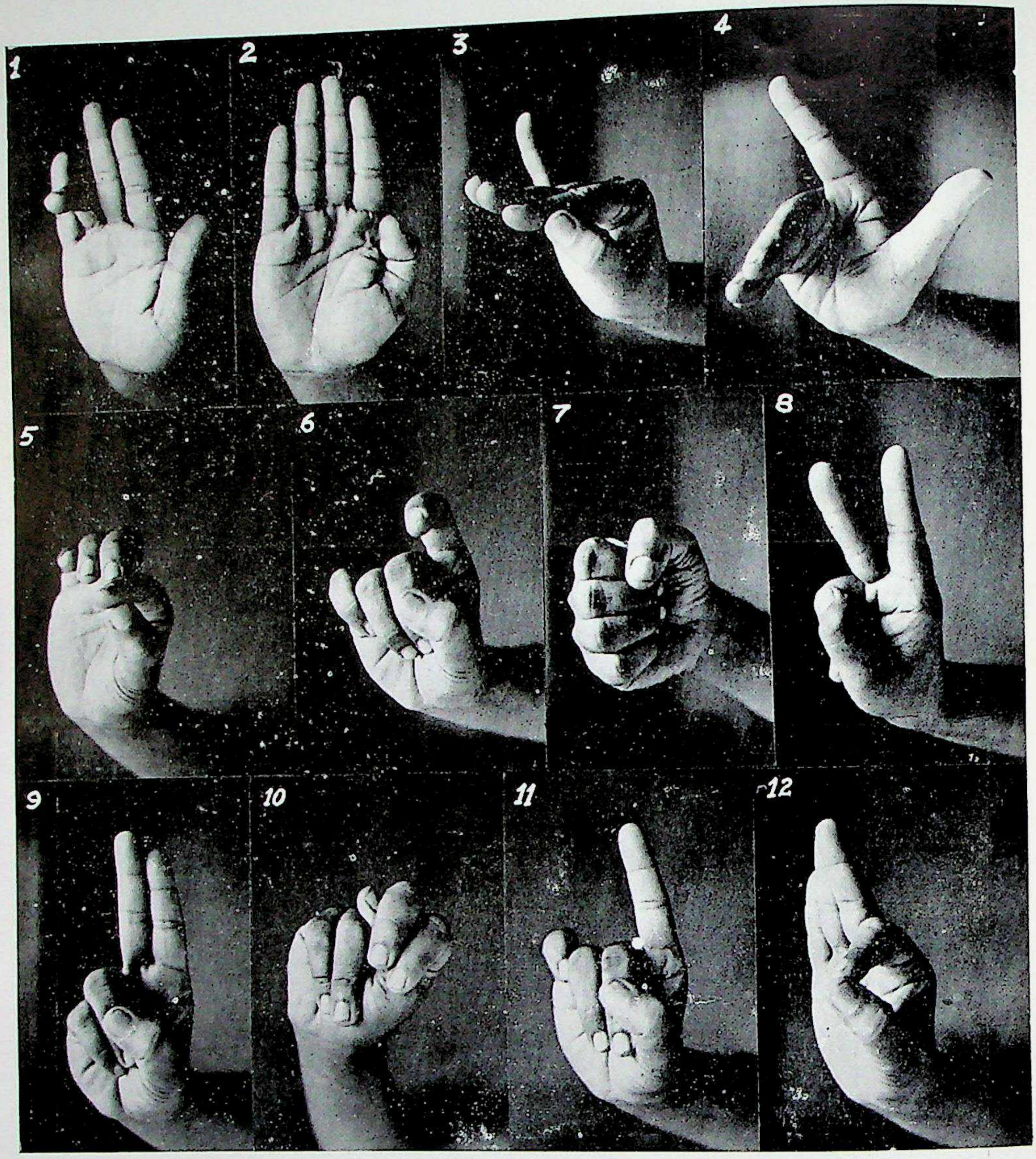
Top : Bibhatsa (Repulsion)
Centre : Adbhut (Wondorous)
Bottom : *Śānt (Serenity).*



THULLAL—The progenitor of Kathakali

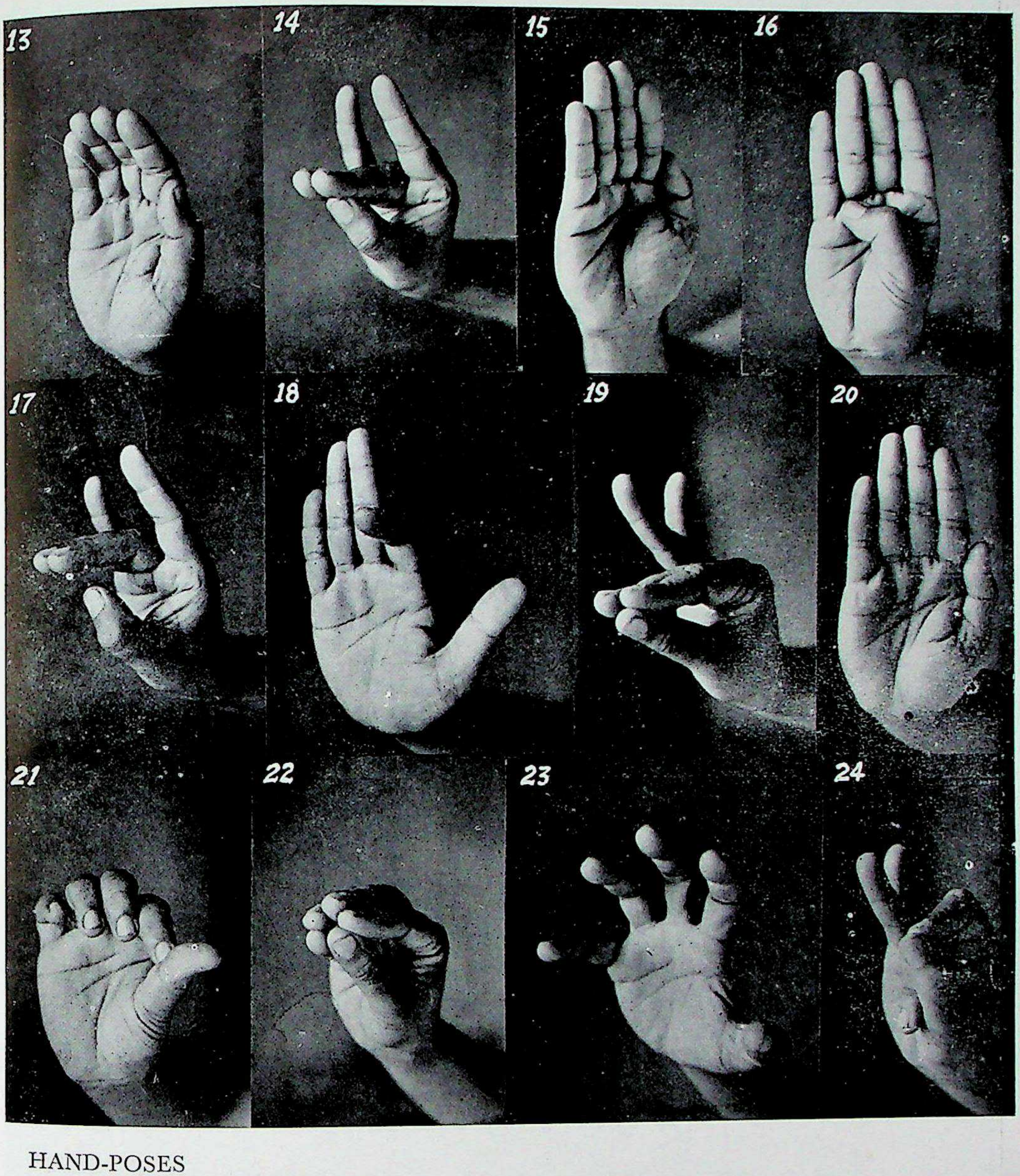
KARTIKEYA (Uday Shankar)





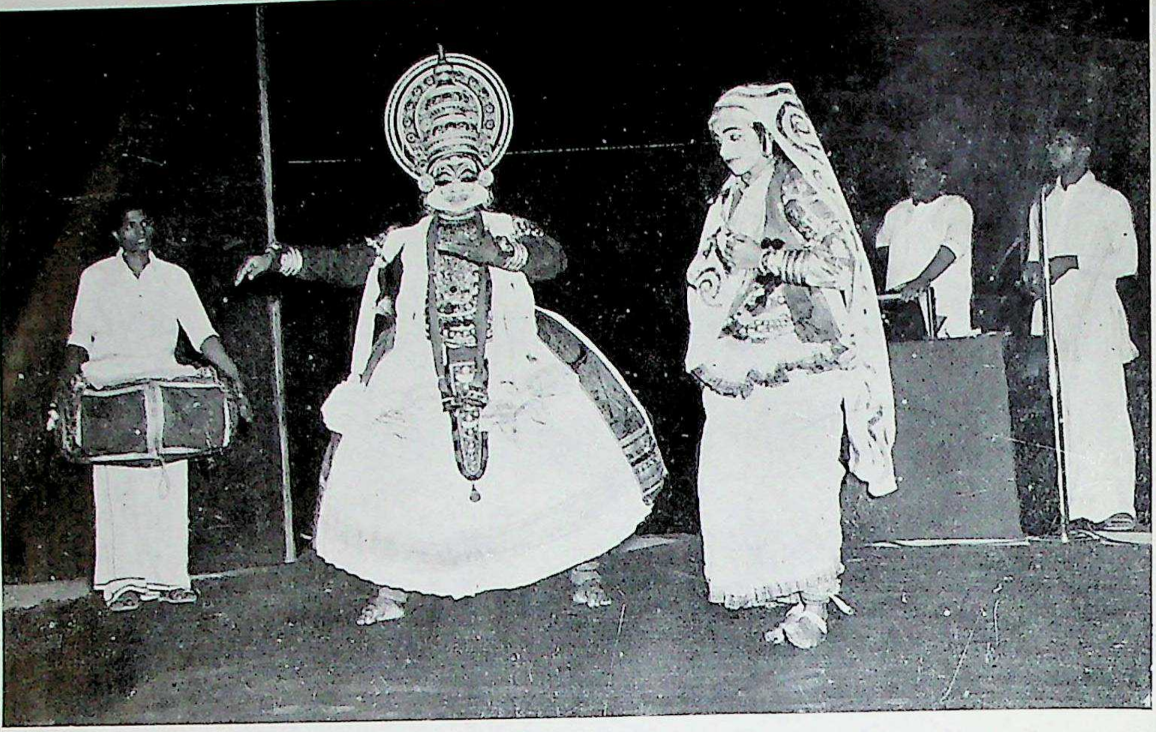
KATHAKALI SINGLE
(A—Samyukta

1. Patāka
2. Tri-patāka
3. Kartarīmukha
4. Ardhacandra
5. Arāla
6. Śukatuṇḍa
7. Muśṭi
8. Sikhara
9. Kāpitha
10. Katakāmukha
11. Sūcīmukha
12. Mudrākhya



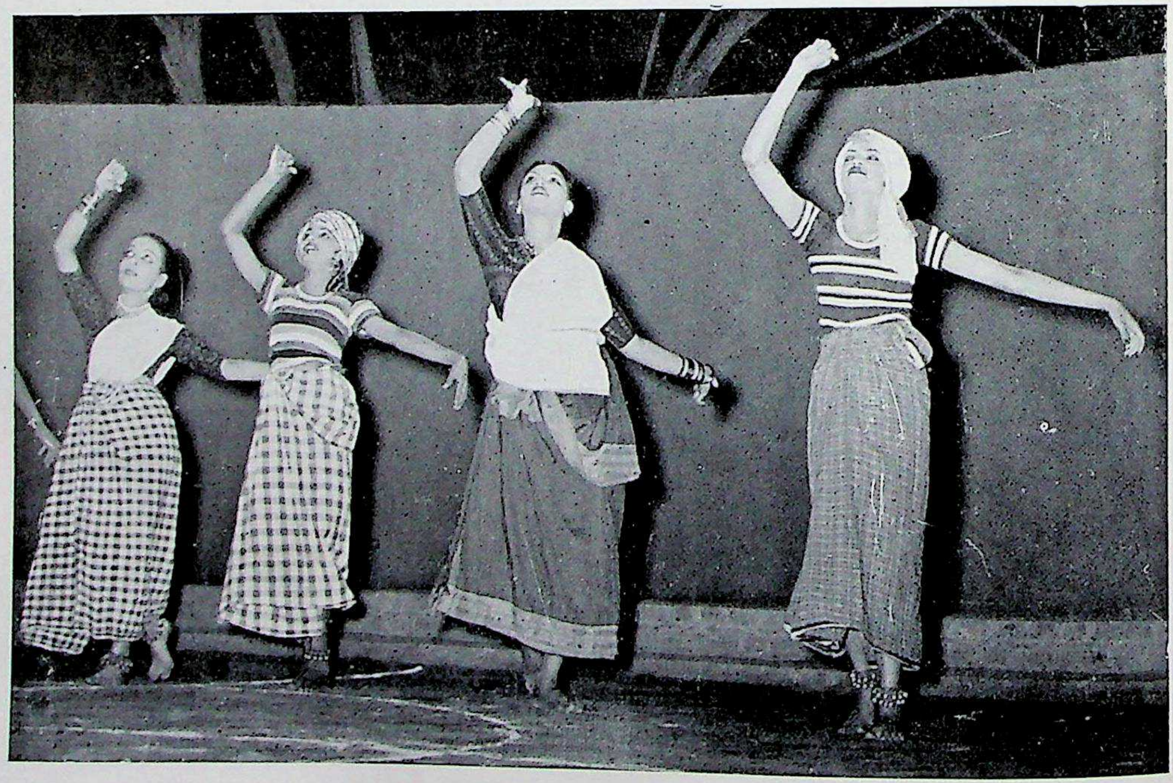
HAND-POSES
Hastas)

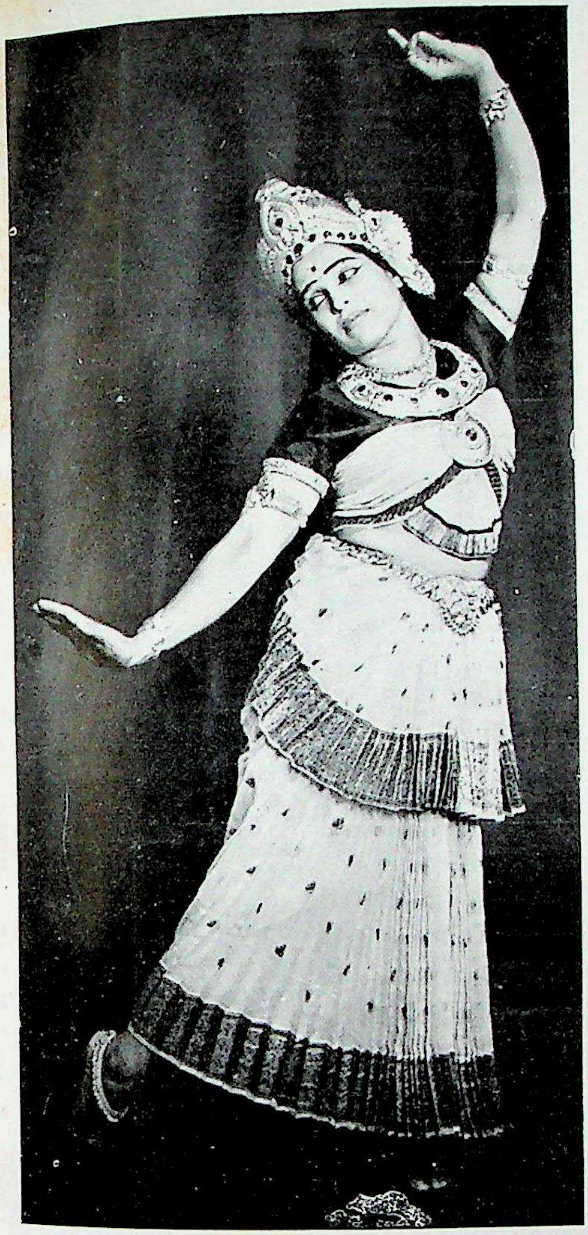
13. Sarpaśirsa
14. Mṛgaśirṣa
15. Añjali
16. Pallava
17. Mukura
18. Bhramara
19. Haṁsāsya
20. Haṁsapaksha
21. Vardhamānaka
22. Mukula
23. Urnanābha
24. Kaṭaka.



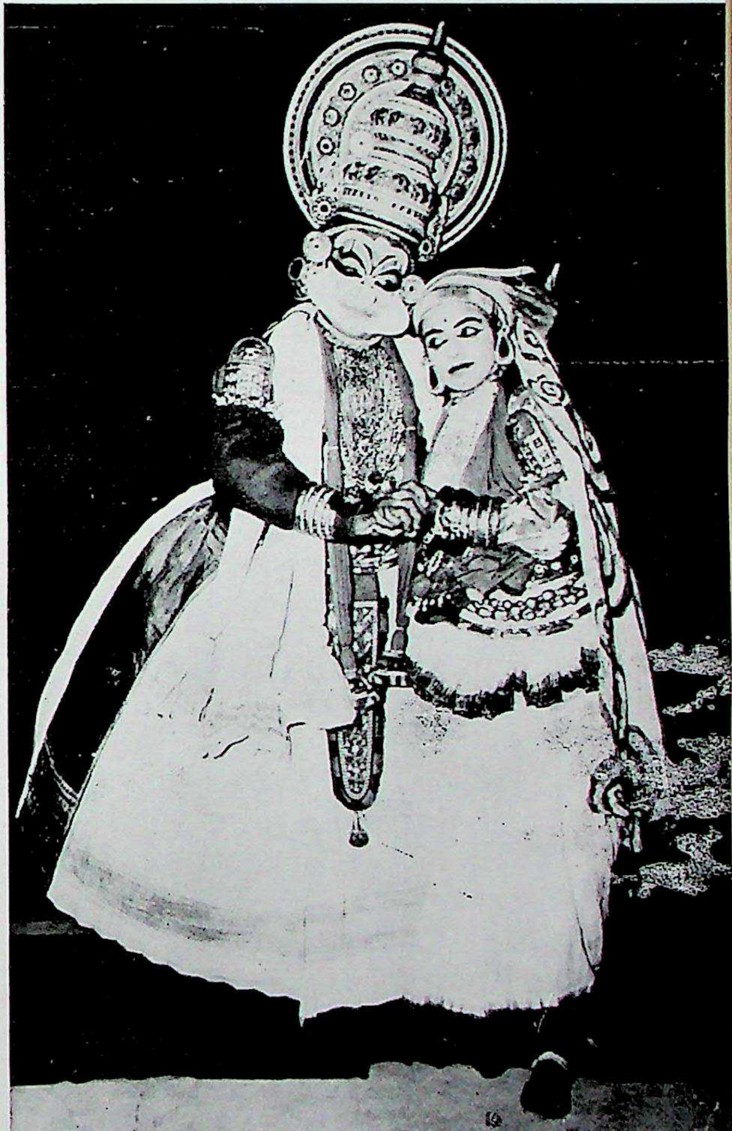
A scene from Kathakali play "Prahlad Charita" staged by Kerala Kala Mandalam troupe. Hunyakashyapa is seen explaining his viewpoint.

Kerala Fisherman dance

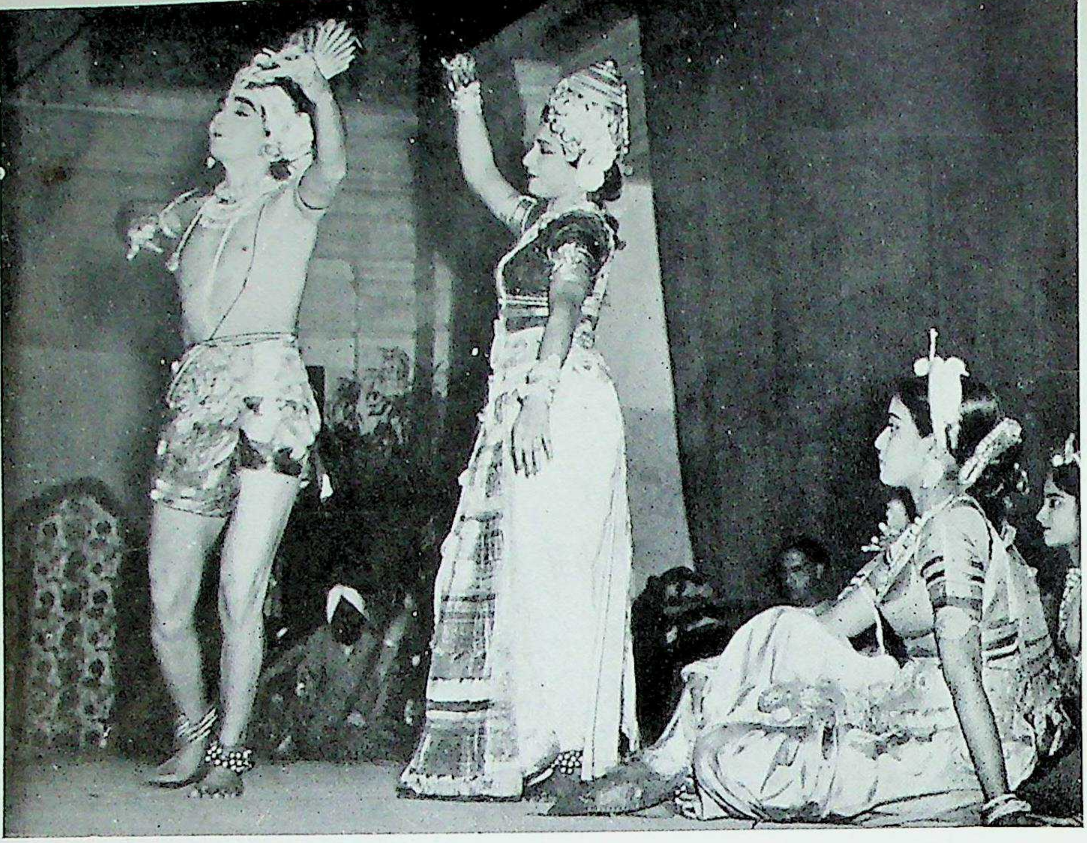




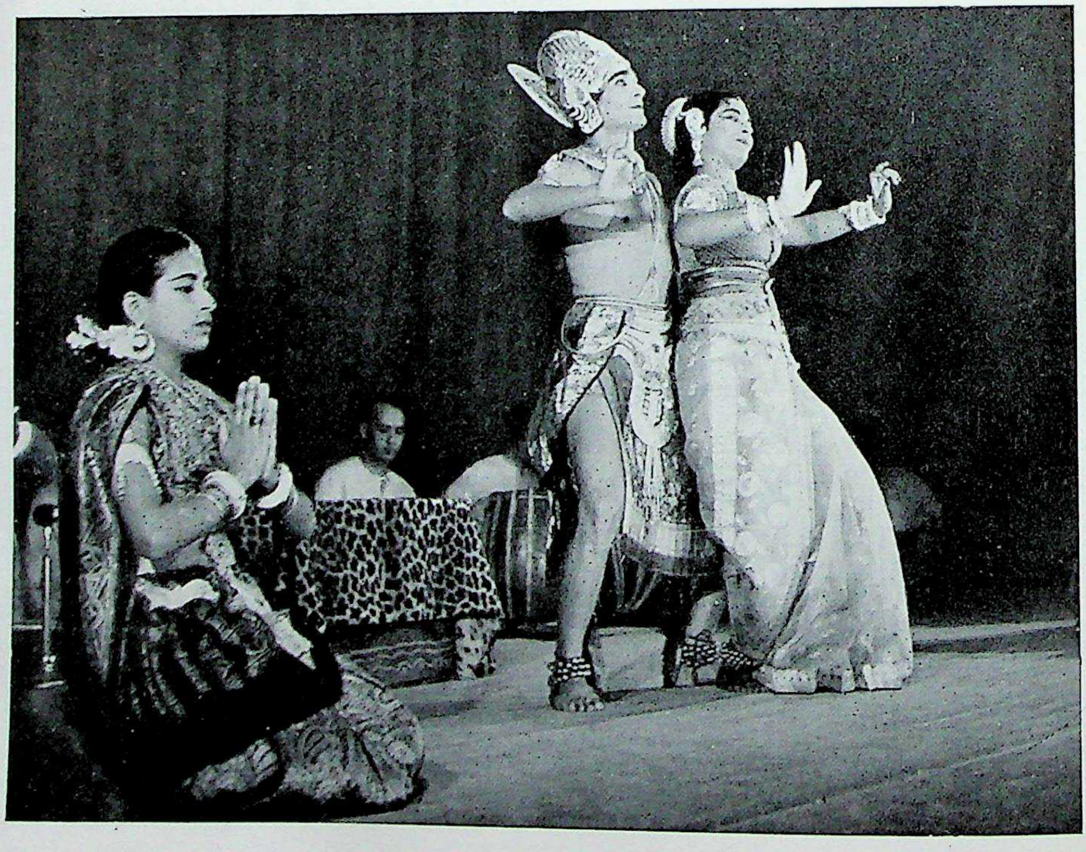
Smt. Thankarnani, wife of Gopinath, as Urvashi (From Vikramorvasian ballet)



A scene from Kathakali play Prahlad Charita



Scenes from "Shiva-Parvati Nritya"—Uday Shankar's ballet based on Kathakali technique



its tension are tested. The arrows are looked at. These and many other dramatic devices are undertaken on the stage through the actions of the eyes and physical movements.

Now the parties are ready for the fight. Challenge is thrown. It is a preliminary action called *Poṛ-Viḷī*. One of the disputants enters and stands on the stool, raises his hand holding a club and challenges his formidable foe. This character is the first to appear and is always one who is on the right. From the midst of darkness now emerges a monstrous figure emanating deafening war cries, and counters the challenging foe, shrieking and brandishing his club.

The battle begins.

It is a wordy dual. Each belittles the other.

The drumming starts provocative sounds. The hair stand at their ends. The audience expectantly awaits the fury of the battle. There are thunders of war cries. The scene mounts to the climax. The battle starts.

The leaders come to close grips and the fate of the battle is decided. There are quick steps, provocative shrieks, pursuits and retreats, dynamic movements. As the intensity of the battle increases, the characters throw away the weapons in hands and fight with mighty blows. How often have you not heard the audience taking sides with the characters and shouting from their seats heaping insults on the demon. All these dramatic scenes leave no gap between the audience and the dramatists and, therefore, create an impression that enables the audience to carry with it an everlasting impression.

AHARYABHINAYA
(*Action of Make-up, Costume and Stage*)

Kathakaḷi is a dance-drama. Dramatisation of a theme is its important 'virtue.' For this reason, the make-up of its actors is elaborate. The costume is voluminous. These have an affinity with different emotions and are highly artistic. The Kathakaḷi actor abides in himself the traits and attributes of the character he represents. But they present an admirable contrast to stage properties : the Kathakaḷi stage is simple.

CHAPTER XII

GROOMING THE ACTOR

SINCE Kathakaḷi is traditionally an art of word-tone drama performed in the open air before a vast audience, for characterisation of actors all media of *āhār-abhinaya* relating to dress and general grooming into role-types are exploited to an admirable degree. An apparent inconsistency has been struck between the choice of costumes and make-up and the normal way of life of the Malabari. A contrast is presented.

Costumes and make-up of Kathakaḷi are heavy, cumbersome, and detailed, yet attractive; the Malabari's physical and social life call for scanty clothes and no make-up. In the role of a character, a Kathakaḷi actor distinguishes himself with a distinctive pattern of the head-dress, the body remaining swathed with a common pattern of high-necked, long-sleeved blouses of varying thickness of cotton cloth and a dome-like flowing skirt for all characters; the Malabari in the actual life retains the body bare and walks barefooted more so, when he enters a temple. Apart from climatic causes, mixed religious thought and social inequalities have exerted influence on Kérala's mode of dressing.

Kathakaḷi costuming has, in this contradiction of life real and illusion, pertinently raged a battle on its origins.

To explain away this singularity, two principal arguments are put forward. The conservative relates the legend that the Raja of Kottarakkara dreamt a form of the dress of sea-nymphs and called it the general costume for Kathakaḷi actors.

Foreigners contend that the costume was borrowed from the Portuguese ladies' dress, because extreme "covering of the body implies a Christian modesty unnatural to the climate of Malabar."[24] If the additions to the normal dress of characters found in the murals of Cochin "weren't caused by the Portuguese and/or Dutch residents of that time we may eat our hats. One may logically assume that the Portuguese and/or Dutch ladies and revered gentlemen fainted dead away of the very idea of exposed female bosoms and even male ones; and that the twenty-four white layers of skirts were probably affected in accordance with the attire of the contemporary European ladies, along with the cumbersome, hot, long-sleeved jackets, as gestures of friendship and Western decency, as the kings and rajahs of Malabar wisely made it their policy to try to avoid trouble with their visitors, to save their people from the horrors of militant instead of peaceful invasions."[25] As a concrete instance, it is pointed out that "the hats of the *Thādis* are Europeon style and the full flowing skirts are not far removed from a farthingale."[26]

These explanations are inconclusive and unconvincing. The costume and make-up of Kathakaḷi strongly reflect religiosity and a ceaseless evolutionary process in which varied religious motives have exerted influence. In their history, the period towards the close of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century is more significant than the modern period marked by the patronage extended by the Queen Mother, Her Highness Maharani Séthu Pārvatī Bāi of Trāvancore, and Kéraḷa's Mahākavi Vallathöl.

Considering the degree to which masks and huge head-dresses were used in the dancing tradition of the old—and what is left of these in modern Kéraḷa—, a stage had come in its art history when masks were replaced by heavy paste-work. In fashioning costumes, a balance was sought to be struck between the contours and colours of the paste-work.

Though in harnessing available resources to evolve an art-form alien influences were freely borrowed, indigenous architectural and sculptural *motifs* too played a vital role. The two ingenious Nambudri Brahmans, Kaplingat and Kallatikote, who improvised the original painted masks of the areca sheath, should be credited with effecting general improvements in the costume as well.

Religiously, the Hindu view of dramaturgy ordains creation of unearthly climate by the aid of adept theatrical accessories where the life and activities of the gods are portrayed. Kathakaḷi being an art of mimicry, the emphasis was laid by master-creators on the torso. The whole costume was divided by them into three distinct parts—the head-dress, the body blouse and the long billowing skirt. Each of these was largely influenced by the Brahmanic and Buddhist concepts of art, though, at a later stage, certain Christian practices were imbibed. The ornate structures of the Brahmanic art and the smooth aspect of the Buddhist art were translated into their forms.

In the head-dresses for evil-doers of kingly status, like Ravana, and for divine agents, the front part incorporated the Buddhist bell-shaped stupa *motif*. Various improvements made in it, such as niche inlay work, setting in *kundan* and stones cut *en cabochon* in the metal frame, are of a later origin—all having evolved until the close of the eighteenth century. The disc mounted at the back of the head-dress for the personages of the first category is representative of the chariot wheel—a Buddhist concept—symbolising the urge to further ambitions unabated. These characters largely drove in state in chariots. The wheel-shape might have later conspired with the form of a halo of the Christian thought, which gave it rim-like depressions. This variety of the head-dress is still so enormous that, in an actual performance the actor-dancer holds it by the right hand, lest it may fall down.

In the head-gear of Hanumān, however, a concrete Brahmanic influence is discernible. It reflects his fundamental characteristic of raising a mountain. This again appears to gather the Christian influence through South-East Asia, at a much later stage, in early nineteenth century.

Introduction of a common costume for the body was in keeping with the complicated make-up. The time taken in the latter was compensated by the time saved in the former. The two parts of this costume, one for the torso and the other for the body's lower part, were influenced both by the Brahmanic and Buddhist arts. The former has a strong Brahmanic influence delineated by its basic ornamentation; the latter has the comparative smoothness of form also found in the dome-like stupas of the Buddhists. However, both have a great affinity with the Moghul *aṇgarkhā* with a closely stitched body part and loose flowing below-the-waist part. In rural India, women too wear loose skirts, called *leñhagās*, which are commonly worn by men dancers of many folk varieties of South India. The provision of a stuffed hoop lents the Christian influence. It aids to a degree in keeping the skirt in a position comfortable for the splayed movements of split legs, which, in turn, maintain it (the skirt) in a constant flair.

In so far as the dress and make-up of female characters are concerned, considerable influence of the Muslim culture of Mophla women is discernible. It is simple.

In the beginning, costumes adopted were imitations of those used in *Krisnattam.* Masks were extensively in vogue, but without a head-dress. Different masks for different characters of the *Ramayana* were earmarked. It was Prince Vettat Svarupam, who rejected all masks of 'rough' types which covered all the realistic imageries of expressions of the face. Head-dresses to distinguish one character from the other were introduced. To create abnormality in the get-up of a role-type, the actor was provided with a typical long coat. The emphasis on the creation of a class of actors introduced another reform in the whole technique of this dance-drama which ultimately determined the nature of their grooming. Hitherto, musicians were the actors; but now musicians —drummers and singers—were made a separate entity and the scope for better expression of the self in the role of the not-self was expanded : heavy, elaborate and magnificent head-dresses and make-up were made possible.

Supplementary aids to costume have freely found their way on the body of the actor-dancer. Largely these are without a definite purpose; though certain accessories have a symbolic or representative function. All types of bangles, anklets, necklaces and armlets, to number a few, are part of a common costuming scheme; but a garland of beads, for instance, may aid to describe an ascetic-pretender.

Emphasis is, however, laid on different items of costume and make-up in different role-types. Kathakaḷi characters, for this purpose, are classified in three categories according to their natures and virtues. These are *Sāttvika* (virtuous), *Rājasika* (vicious) and *Tāmasika* (destructive). All characters of gods, *dévatās* and *apsarās*—the divine and celestial beings—saints and other virtuous personages are grouped under *Sāttvika.* Though gods and kingly, virtuous personalities are presented in the normal costume with appropriate head-dress and make-up an ascetic—a sage or a saint —character may be scantily dressed to bring about some realism.

Demons, evil-doers and bad spirits are classified under *Rājasika* characters. Their make-up makes the appearance most formidable, fearful and terrifying. Long flowing tuffs of thick black hair, long and pointed nails looking like claws, round and bulging eyes and protruding molars excite terror in the mind of the spectator and elevate the characters from their actual life to a demon. Terrific and destructive acts are exhibited by *Tāmasika* characters. The destructive or terrible activities of Lord Śiva make him *Tāmasika.*

Costumes and make-up are so appropriately divided among the above three types of characters that they help in alluding to the audience the nature of the role-types and of the complicated theatrical pattern of Kathakaḷi. Though heavy, costumes give to actors a stately dignity, make-up-cumbersome but highly artistic—lend to actors a realistic touch of the unearthly characters represented. Complexity of grooming brings with it a grace in this art that would have had to be cultivated otherwise : actors enact a story in slow, graceful and measured gait, the tempo of which rises with its gradual progress.

CHAPTER XIII

GROOMING THE ACTOR : MAKE-UP

In a drama, the most striking feature is the facial make-up which helps create a story's atmosphere on the stage for the audience. *Bharata Natya Sastra* describes four colours of the face : natural (*svabhavik*), bright (*prasanna*), reddened (*rakt*) and dark (*syama*), which broadly classify the virtues (*gunas*) of the characters. Natural face presents an indifferent mood; bright face reflects wonder, laughter and love; reddened face is indicative of intoxication and, in the case of heroic characters, the terrible and pathetic sentiments; and the dark face symbolises the terrible and the odious sentiments. Appropriate facial colours are representative of various mental stages and emotional situations, the ultimates of which are the sentiments. These are aids to beautify gestures. The *Natya Sastra* believes that even a few gestures in conjunction with the proper adoration of colours of the face double their charm, just as the rising moon does at night. Glances set out through a proper make-up of the eye, in relationship with the colour scheme on the rest of the face, help alluding the innate characteristics of a role-type and the different states and sentiments on which the histrionic representation rests.

The make-up of a Kathakaḷi character is peculiarly native to the Kéraḷa folk-art. In folk theatrical varieties, huge masks and make-ups were as much prevalent during the historic span of time as they are now—the exception being that the monstrosity of the masks of the old has now shrunk to a more convenient, seeable size. Their general pattern and the earliest form can be explained *vis-a-vis* many *tantric* concepts whose origins are traced from deep-rooted superstitions evolved by the Brahmins and from the tradition of tribal tatooing. In early sculptural images and frescoes, the Buddha is represented in *tantric* forms. The creation of masks can be dated from the period when evil forces became portrayed through devilish designs. These travelled outside India to China, and South-East Asia which, in turn, contributed something acceptable as modifications to these masks, until the seas became frequently negotiated for trade and other purposes, that is, roundabout the first Christian era, the period of the Pallavas and, later, of the Vijayanagaram empire. The masks had achieved sufficient refinement during the Pallavas and they acquired a state of maturity during the Vijayanagaram days. It was at this stage that the possibility of planting various contours of the masks on the face was studied and practised. Kathakaḷi make-ups look like masks and call for a laborious process of application. It would not be correct to say that the tradition is non-Aryan or pre-Aryan. The practice of using grim faces for demoniac characters was a normal habit amongst the Aryans, who, to slight the "natives", attributed to them such forms of faces which could only be for characters ignoble. It was at a later stage—roundabout the seventeenth century—that rulers themselves started participating in dramatic representations in disguise. To conceal their identity, their faces were made-up. The clue for colours was provided by *Bharata Natya Sastra* and contours by the folk tradition. The art of make-up has since stayed as a tradition and is handed down from generation to generation for treating each groups of characters differently. It is in the hands of a few men who know the formulae to prepare various points. They have, however, lost the import and significance of the basic make-up. None can argue about it, partly also because it symbolises role-types not an individual personality.

Why various distinct lines are drawn on the face of different role-types, is not now explainable; they are accepted dogmatically. One purpose, however, seems clear : elaborate make-up heightens dramatic effects. Colour symbolism has, of course, support from the *Sastras* : they reflect certain categories of emotions and *gunas* (attributes). The general conception in the classification of the colours *vis-a-vis* the nature of characters is as follows :

Green	represents	*Sattvika*	nature,
Red	represents	*Rajasic*	nature,
Black	represents	*Tamasic*	nature,
Yellow	combines	*Sattvika* and *Rajasic*	natures.

Explained simply, green goes with godliness, white with spirituality, red with ambition and violence, yellow with passivity, and black with evil. Kathakaḷi characters are likewise grouped into five major role-types, each having a specific make-up and costume, differing in details according to the taste of an individual actor and the school of tradition to which he belongs. These role-types are *Minnukku*, *Paccha*, *Katti*, *Thadi* (three varieties), and *Kari*.

In the case of mythical beings, *risis* and respected women, *apsaras*, virtuous princes and princesses, simple make-up is used. Rice-powder or a thin coating of "self" colour is applied. The lips, painted in brilliant red, are kept closed in smilet. The curve of the mouth is modified. The eye-lids are made up in black with antimony and the brows and eyes elongated and contoured with crayon.

MINNUKKU is the polished variety of facial make-up, simple and gentle, consisting in smoothening the actor's face with a coating of a mixture of yellow and red pigments. The composition obtains a "self" (or natural skin) complexion colour. It is suggestive of nobility, restraint, poise and spiritual attainments—attributes usually found in Brahmins, *risis* and virtuous women. The eyes and eyelashes are painted and contours elongated with a black unguent and a greasy collyrium. Sometimes the face is decorated with white or cream-colour dots, running from the cheeks to the forehead in a bow-shape. The lips are reddened and the forehead is decorated with a caste mark. This colour scheme serves to give a symbolic glow of piety to a devotee character. Women role-types are given delicate touches of the make-up. Powdered mica is sprinkled over the face. It helps in brightening up the texture of the make-up. The elongated eyes and eye-brows lend a sensuous feeling of delicate refinement. The hair-do resembles as hermit's coiffure gathered up in a slightly tilted *lingam* (miniature column) shape on the left of the forehead.

TEPPU is the collective name given to *Paccha* and *Kathi* make-ups.

PACCHA or predominantly deep green face role-types are gods, celebrated mythological heroes and virtuous personages, symbolising inner refinement poise, heroism and moral excellence. They include heroes of a play and noble characters, Indra, Krsna, Rama, Laksman, Bharat, Satrughan, the five Pandavas of the *Mahabharata*, Hariscandra and Nala. The front part of their faces is given smooth deep green base on which *chuttis* (white rice-paste curves) run from the centre of the chin, covering the lower jaw, to either side of the face. The eyes and the eye-lashes are painted black and the lips bright red. It assumes the shape of a broad-blade sabre or of a sweeping curve of a bow. The ends taper down near the temples. *Chutti* is terraced; its five parallel rings enclose the face, giving the make-up the semblance of an earthen pot. During gesticulation, these rice-paste curves produce lustrous frames. The forehead, above the bow-tie shaped painted portion, is covered by a red ribbon of the gilded headgear. The make-up of Krsna presents a pleasing variation of *paccha* role-type make-up, so far as his headgear and costume are concerned.

KATTI : As compared to *paccha*, the make-up of *katti* role-types is complicated. This term literally means the knife, because in its make-up the shapes of colour positions resemble sharply bent *kurkis* (daggers). Evil, demoniac and fierce characters standing against the hero of a play—Pratinayakas, such as *Asuras* (the enemies of the gods), ambitious and arrogant Ravana, Keechaka, Kamsa and Dussasana—are distinctively treated with this make-up. Their faces are given a foundation with green colour; the sides of their noses are painted in red. The red paint round the nose rises up to the forehead above the eye-brows. It is like a patch, an upturned moustache, covering the upper jaw. Its border lines are treated in white. On the green base of the rest of the face, a *chutti* runs along the jaw-bones from the middle of the cheek. Two white knobs, called *chuttipuvvus*, are placed on the face.

These vary in size with the degree of savagery of the characters, and adorn their nose-tips and foreheads. Rising from near the inner edge of the outer crescent of the white rice-paste, a line curls up round the nose and comes to rest in the cavity of the eye-brow. To add ferocity to the fearsome appearance of some demoniac characters like Ravana and Dussasana, two long protruding canine teeth (called *dhustras*) are perched on either side of the mouth. These drop over the lower lips. These accessories in dramatic make-up are indicative of evil characters, power, defiance, arrogance, majesty, demeanour and ambition, followed with their taking law unto themselves. *Katti* make-up characters stand in a singular position : the startling composition of green with red symbolises high accomplishments and, at the same time, evil designs.

TADI (BEARD) : Thus far the make-up of clean-shaven virtuous and evil characters and of women is discussed. But there are in Hindu mythology bearded characters as well. They are, again, goodgodly and evil-demoniac. To differentiate one from the other, three *Tadi* make-ups are in vogue : *Veluppa Tadi* (white beard), *Cokanna Tadi* (red beard) and *Karuppa Tadi* (black beard). In these make-ups, white *chutti* is not planted on the face.

VELUPPA TADI consists of a white beard and a fur-coat. It is a realistic make-up for characters like Hanuman, the son of God Vayu, and other monkey sages and warriors. The upper half of the face—the nether part of the eyes—and lips are treated with a black ointment. The chin at the middle is decorated with a white rosette, bearing a red dot within. Red paint is applied to the lower part of the lower lip, up to the chin. A thin coating of *chutti* decoratively encloses the black-end part of the face and meets the *chuttinata*—the hem of the head-dress. Another white pattern develops on either side of the cheeks and circling the red spots, starting from the base of the green painted nose. Along the chins white lines run up to the temples. On the tip of the nose and the forehead two oval-shaped spots are given in red.

COKANNA TADI : This make-up is given to hideous characters. Literally, it represents red beard and jacket. The face is painted red, with black contour lines drawn round the eyes, lips and chin. Some pieces of paper are stuck on either side of the nose and the chin, up to the eyes, in *cutti*, to give an idea of moustache. This adds to the ferocity of less evil characters, like Bali, Sugriva, Kalakeya and Dussasana. The pattern and colour scheme of the make-up of these characters present a marked difference from that of *katti*. An astounding skill is shown in the balanced use of blazing red and deep black colours, supported with patches of brilliant white. The pattern of this make-up is not indicative of restraint and stately dignity of the role-types; it is aggressive in look. Floral pattern of *katti* make-up stands in contrast to fauna pattern of *Cokanna Tadi*. The eye-brows and lashes are not elongated; no *cutti* is applied. The face is dubbed in red and treated with black lines. Around the eyes, almost a square patch of deep black colour is provided to give to the eyes a fiendish look of an evil designer. It must have been 'copied' from the eye-masks of a thief. Lips, painted in black, are given a hilly curve to give the role-type a lurid image of a beastly character. Running from the upper lip are two white paste bristled rows throwing the black patch round the eyes in bold relief and adding ferocity to the fiery red eyes, and demarcating the black portion from the remaining nether part of the face is red. *Cuttipuvvus* (white blobs) on the tip of the nose and the forehead are bigger in size than those put on by *katti* characters. It is the most impressive of all make-ups in Kathakaḷi.

KARUPPA TADI : The third type of bearded character's make-up is with a black beard and coat. These characters include Kali, *kattalan* (hunter), brigands and robber chieftains. In their make-up, the face is first coated with black unguent. The eyes are bracketed within oval-shaped white border lines, the area between two such lines being painted in red. Small white bristles adorn the ridges. Lips are in red. The tip of the nose bears a *cuttipuvvu*.

KARI : Grotesque characters are presented all black. They are vile and evil designers, such as Surpanakha and Simhika. Their faces are painted in black and the cheeks have a red crescent in the middle. Weird patterns in white are drawn on the face; a pair of *dhumstras* are provided. Shiva in the role of *kirata* (hunter) is also given this type of the make-up.

A remarkable feature of the Kathakaḷi make-up is the reddening of the white of the eyes of all characters by putting in a few young seeds of *cunda poov* (*solanum pubescence*). Crimson eyes stand in contrast to the colour scheme of the face. The practice is usually followed in *pacca* and *minnukku* faces.

This is Kathakaḷi make-up—a study in contrast of colours and designs, of the simplicity of the stage and elaborateness of facial decorations.

But this is not all. Besides the make-up of the principal characters, picturesque variations are presented by the 'get-up' of intermediary characters, like Garuda (eagle mount of Visnu), Hamsa (mount of Saraswati), Taksaka (a serpent king) and Narasimha (men-lion, a manifestation of Visnu). Attendants have plain make-up and costume; comedians and the deformed look grotesque.

THE "GREEN-ROOM" PROCESS

Paints used in Kathakaḷi make-up are freshly prepared and applied to ensure correctness of rhythmic curves and precision. So far, by no scientific process, are these stocked for ready application. Stones of different colours, such as red, green, yellow, blue and black, are first powdered and filtered before sulphur and a greasy substance usually coconut oil are mixed to make a paste. These stones have come as a substitute to the luxurious *lapis lazuli* and *turquoise*. The *cutti* paint is a mixture of rice-paste and lime. As it dries, it leaves a strong and solid frame-work.

Paints ready, the Kathakaḷi "green room" sets itself to a more serious and skilled work. The rhythm of the drum that has announced the performance has pervaded the silence of the "room" and awakened the actors to get ready. It is lit by the small flame of a brass coconut oil lamp. The actors lie flat on the ground. In the midst of darkness, interspersed by sprinkles of instable light, the make-up artist applies a layer of paint, followed by another coating. With the aid of thin slivers of bamboo, the artists work up decorative designs, section by section, on the surface and finally ridges of *cutti* are placed. Some older actors sit cross-legged and paint elaborate patterns within the frame-work of *cutti.* The durability of this make-up is ensured by an oily base. Perspiration does not wash off the colours but add to their brightness. There has never been an occasion when a carefully executed make-up has broken down.

A peep in the "green room" will frequently reveal the anxiety of the actors to give beautiful patterns to their make-ups. Designs are obliterated and renewed until a satisfactory pattern is obtained. No doubt, this anxiety is dynamic and has brought the Kathakaḷi make-up near perfection.

A "CRITIQUE"

Realism in the make-up is temporal and emotional. The true state of a character's personality and mind is portrayed in it. A kingly demon will have a green patch, for instance, his royal dignity is shattered by segments of red symbolising his evil motives. But where evil alone reigns supreme, by deed and action, the character is in red, interspersed by black. An entirely black figure is an embodiment of savagery and wilderness—not necessarily associated with devilish activities. The white colour used in different patterns serves to draw contrasts and to heighten certain colour schemes. The black-end eyes of Dussasana are, for instance, enclosed by white paste into squares running on either side of the eyes and on the nose. These meet a white spot on the forehead. Other colour accessories on his face merely build up the demoniac nature which are born out by his immotional attributes. The use of red, therefore, helps in portraying that the character is devilish in his actions too. White colour has no other function than to heighten the colour effect and to add to the caricature of the immotional figure which a thicker imagination might draw of a good or an evil character. Terraced ridges of *cutti* on the face of godly figures stand distinctively from the plain ridges of demoniac kings. The objective is not merely to decorate faces but aims at drawing some distinctive features of immotional character on the face. Why five ridges are given on the stately face of godly character ? These are godly symbolic of the five great rivers of India, apart from epitomising nobility on the face. Unterraced broad-wind ridges supported by a couple of other ridges in the case of *katti* characters do signify ambition and a desire to achieve the ends by fair and foul means. The two blobs on the tip of the nose and in the middle of the forehead, instead of a plain nose and a caste mark of a virtuous character, tend to symbolise singlehandedness followed with single lines of pursuit. Similarly, the white patch enclosing the eyes of black-bearded characters such as a forest man enhance the innocent savagery by broad treatment of the nether part of the eyes up to the cheek-bone. The treatment gives a smile turn to the face—a small astonishment. A similar attribute is found from the treatment of his lips by white paste running along its outer edges. The function of the white paste, therefore, is not to be associated with a temper of a character but is to be identified with the needs of skill tradition of the make-up. In treating the mouth and the eyes with red paint and black collyrium respectively, a definite motive is exhibited. The lips of the godly figure have two circular attachments at either ends of the mouth, apart from wave-like curve given to the upper and the lower lips. The significance of these two sides circular patches is to get self-position and restraint to the character which qualities are wanting in other role types. *Katti* characters do not paint their lips in bright red, but red beards do, of course, without circular side patches which are actually lifted up in rather a rectangular shape. The eyes are elongated on both the sides towards the base of the nose and the temples. It is the nether part of the eyes which is elongated boldly in the case of the stately characters, the difference between godly and the ignoble being that the collyrium rises on the root of the nose in the case of the former characters, but takes a slight turn upwards at the inner ends of the eyes in the case of the latter. The treatment of eyes in the case of other characters is self-explanatory.

Women characters are normally noble and are, therefore, treated noble except in the case of a few such as Putana and Surapanakha who carry a small black patch, semi-circular patch on the cheek-bone. Surapanakha is treated as a demon and is given a grotesque make-up including a circular broom of feathers as head-dress—a pure caricature of the temper and the activities.

Conclusion

Kathakaḷi make-up is an elaborate process lasting for over three hours. It helps in giving a super-human look to the actors. Whether it is a man's make-up or the woman's, the work is conducted by a make-up expert.

The make-up of the male characters, other than saints, is tedious. The role-type lies flat on a matted floor and the expert starts drawing "the designs" on the face with a thin rod (picture No. 1). The face part being complete, the role-type gives the finishing touches himself (picture No. 2). Thereafter he stands up for putting on the costume. The skirt is a well-starched and pressed-into-frills garment. But before the skirt is put on, the actor ties 20 to 40 pieces of short cloth round his waist by the help of a long cloth twisted rope in order to give the skirt an oval shape. He then puts on the jacket, etc. (picture No. 3). The finishing touches to the costume are given by the costume attendant. The actor is profusely ornamented with garlands of beads, armlets, cupped mirrors, etc. (picture No. 4). Fully decorated, the actor gives the last minute touches to his make-up with the help of the cupped mirror (picture No. 5). His head-dresses are huge and often unwieldy. These are tied by an attendant (picture No. 6).

Normally women do.not enact feminine rolls, but where they do, very simple make-up is done by themselves or by a woman expert. The final touches, however, are given by one of the actors —largely, the role-type who is to appear with her (picture No. 7). The last part of the costuming is the tying up of anklet bells. Women fancy to have the silver *paijaeb* (an ornament) and then tie the bells (picture No. 8). In the case of male characters a decorative woollen is tied immediately above the anklet and the bells fixed on a leather pad or tied right below the knee (picture No. 9).

Kathakaḷi make-up tradition today widely differs from what it was in the seventeenth century. It shows modifications step by step and no doubt, therefore, that the real significance has been lost with the impact of theatrical motives of realism.

CHAPTER XIV

COSTUME, ORNAMENT AND HEAD-DRESS

COSTUMES, according to the *Nāṭya Śāstra*, play an important role in the successful production of a play. The *dramatis personae* are of different types and make-ups. Bharata has described four kinds of costumes and the graces, called *Alaṅkāras*, such as flower, garlands, ornaments and draperies. Garlands are of five kinds and ornaments of four—those which are fixed by piercing the limbs (*avédhya*), those which are tied up (*baṅdhaniya*), those that are worn (*prakṣépya*) and those which are put round (*ārōpya*). Different ornaments are prescribed for actors and actresses. These include *kunḍala* (ear-pendant), *muktāvalī* (necklace), *añguliya mudrā* (finger-ring) and *bāhu-nālī* (ornament for the fore-arms). The hair of womén are made up. A wide margin, however, is given by Bharata for dressing actors and actresses according to regional needs. Dresses, ornaments and hair-cutting, etc. are to be regulated according to the habitation and birth of the actors.

Kathakaḷi costumes and ornaments conform to *Nāṭya Śāstra* description in many ways, yet the contradiction that they present against Kéraḷa's climate cannot be easily brushed aside. Nay, for the most part, Kathakaḷi costumes and head-dresses are alike in spite of differences in the role-types, *Minnukku* characters excepted. The performer's entire body is swathed with over-flowing garments. An enormous skirt, somewhat resembling to women's costume of the Elizabethan period, is common to all male characters, except Brahmins and *riṣis*. Its bottom part is sufficiently wide and is provided with pleats. It hangs down below the knees. Underneath the outer skirt is a voluminous short skirt, something like a *tutu*. It gives wonderful swagger to the movements of an actor, who holds the skirt in a constant flare by the splayed position of his knees. The voluminous skirt is made of broad ribbons of white cotton embroidered cloth, interspersed with two or three red ones. It is tied round the waist in a way that free and dexterous movements are ensured. To either side of the skirt are attached embroidered cloth; in the front hangs *munti*, red flag decorated with crescents and stars. The body is covered with a coloured vest, over which many pieces of broad cloth, or strips, called *Uttarāyan*, and consisting of one red and several white pieces, hang from the neck. To two of these strips of cloth are attached card-board, bell-shaped cups with mirrors, which are arrogantly manipulated by actors during dance interludes. These are like a pair of the *mañjīrās* (brass cymbals) commonly used in the dances of Tañjöre and Maṇipur. The ends of these resemble inverted lotuses. Heroes wear long-sleeved cotton jackets, short in size and red in colour (for, mostly, red matches the base colour of the make-up). A broad breast-plate and many garlands of beads cover the chest; metal epaulettes, the shoulders; and bracelets, the arms. The *Koṭalāram* is the covering for the breast and made of some fine embroidered cloth.

SPECIAL TYPES : Special types of costumes are assigned to special characters.

PACCHA : Celebrated mythological heroes like Indra, Rugmaṅgaḍa, Nala, Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa wear the common voluminous skirt and a vest. The colour of the skirt of Kṛṣṇa is bright yellow; his jacket is mostly dark-blue. His head-dress has no halo attached to it. It terminates in a bristle of peacock feathers, cut short and bound with their own quills. He wears an enormous garland of flowers (*vana-mālā*).

MINNUKKU : The costume of the male characters of the *Minnukku* type, such as Brahmins and *riṣis* is unostentatious. It is a white or slightly coloured loin cloth. *Riṣis* are distinguished from the rest in this category by grey or black beard and a head-gear which is coiffure made up in the form of a *jaṭā-mukuṭa*. They wear small ear-discs and a long beard. Their torso is bare, with ash applied on it. Garlands of beads suspend round their neck. Besides the waist-cloth, they have a girdle.

Women characters, impersonated by men, have a simple costume. Their body and arms are covered by closely fitting red jackets. Over their chests are gilded breast-plates with red breasts fixed to them. Red and white scarfs flow over their shoulders and cover these. A coloured veil, usually ornamented in gold or silver, covers the knot of the hair-do, and runs round the forehead and the chin. It falls down from above, like the drapery of the Buddha, to the back of the waist. A white cotton *sāṛī*, pleated with folds upon folds in the front, hangs from the waist down to the knees.

TĀḌIS : According to the colour of the beards, *Tāḍi* characters put on a jacket. In the case of a black-bearded wild hunter, he carries a bow with arrows in a quiver and a sabre. His make-up and costume present him somewhat a puzzled being, with glances cast hither and thither, suspiciously. He is an alert and unsophisticated human being, whose abode in the woods is not penetrated by the civilization. He, therefore, symbolises the supreme majesty of joyous simplicity and a free life engaged in constant conflict between safety and fears from the wild life.

WHITE BEARD : The suggestion of a great monkey, like Hanuman, is completed when a role-type dons a vast circular white, woolly beard of *yak's* wool and an enormous white fur-coat. Long white bast hair hang at the back. The appearance thus presented is really wonderful; his eyes are enclosed by black lozenges from which thin white lines coil round his nose treated with white paste. *Cuṭṭi* steps up his cheeks like the terraced pyramid. Half-moons round his blackened mouth add to the picturesque presentation of the monkey god.

RED BEARD : The red fur-coat that envelops the body of red beard role-types is enormous and the skirt is more bulging. His role in Kathakaḷi is significant. The ornaments that he wears, the glances that he casts, the tempestuous dancing that he displays and the cries that he makes have but one objective—to be fierce and earth-shaking. The costumes help in presenting him as a character of rather disproportionate body, untamed and bursting into physical prowess. In his anger, he grunts and growls like any savage beast. He is boisterous and derisive and he delights in sneering at everything that comes in his 'way'.

KARI : *Kāri* is the most grotesque figure to be found on the Kathakaḷi stage and is wholly attired in black costumes, with enormously ugly breasts attached to the breast-plate. Such a character evokes disgust.

A "CRITIQUE"

In the scheme of costumes, the bells and draperies reflect a decided impact of a non-Malayali art tradition. In all probability, religious thought as much helped in making the bells as the Buddhist stupa architectural *motif* influenced the form of the headgear of virtuous, kingly personages, like Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.

The skrit is in no way an imitation of the West. It appears that civilized women of the West and East thought alike for their dress below the waist. We find, therefore, that with the development of the Victorian skirt, India had the *léhéngā*, an abbreviated copy of men's *añgarkhā* of the Medieval Era. For the most part of a dance, free movement of legs being necessary, it is not surprising that the actors preferred a loose garment to a tight and closely fitted one. But, that it had to be made a class by itself, it was given a form and decoration much distinct from the West. The skirt has no relationship with the leaves of coconut palm or any such thing of Kéraḷa. In all probability, the skirt is a modification of the Buddhist *cōgā* (long flowing loose garment). The rhythmic sway of the skirt infuses majesty in the spectacular movements of the actor. Buddhist influence is, again, discernible in the case of red and white scarf-strips which resemble crimson *paṭukās* hanging round the necks of the monks. The use of vests puzzles a critic, for even the Buddhists scarcely covered their chests. When and how these were incorporated in the scheme of Kathakaḷi costumes is not known, but it can be said that their introduction has given an extremely balancing picture. It appears that in the decision to have long-sleeved jackets, the need of theatrical properties was acutely felt.

ORNAMENTS : Almost identical ornaments are worn by all male characters except the *Minnukkus* and the *Kāris*. In most parts, these conform to the ornaments prescribed by Bharata in *Nāṭya Śāstra.* However, inspiration too has been drawn from Malayan icons, which are decorated with five categories of ornaments. They are—

(i) *Kaṭi-baṅdha* (waist-band);
(ii) *Kiritam* for *Vaiṣṇavite* images;
(iii) *Karaṅḍa Mukuṭa* for female deities;
(iv) *Jatā-Mukuṭa* for Śaivite figures; and
(v) *Prabhā-Tōraṇ* (halo of radiance).

A pair of round disc-like ear-rings, *kunḍala,* is provided for the ear. They are beautifully coloured and gilded. A crest-jewel and the *cévikkuṭṭu,* a small circular concave ornament are for the decoration of the ears. The *paccha* and *cuṭṭi* types of characters use *kunḍala* and *cévikkuṭṭa; kunḍala* is the only ear ornament used by female and *Tāḍi* characters. There are other ornaments, such as bracelets, armlets, finger-rings, nails of silver, necklace, garland, a girdle for the waist, a chain round the loin's belt or girdle, the breast covers and a pair of anklets. The fore-arms are decorated with *kaṭaṛamas* and *kelases* or bangles, the latter being above the former. The necklace worn by female characters is made of glass beads. Saintly characters wear garlands of various kinds and shapes.

Black demons put on an enormous disc—a kind of ear-ring. At the time of "curtain-call", in the case of kingly demons, still larger discs, held up by two attendants on either side of the halo, are visible.

Male characters mostly wear sleak silver nails, tapering at one end and provided with a socket at the other, on the fingers of the left hand. These nails give an elegant appearance and enhance the beauty of finger manipulations and the movements of the hand. When used by demoniac characters, these are aids to their ferocity, turning the hand into a claw thirsty for blood.

All actors wear tiny bells (*nupura*) on their legs.

HEAD-DRESSES

Head-dresses make an important contribution to the aesthetic appeal and dramatic effects of the Kathakaḷi dance-drama. They triumphantly demonstrate the skill of the master-craftsman to carve intricate, elaborate and delightful patterns. Crown-like in form, the head-dresses are inset with gleaming glass pieces and have many charming ornamental variations. They are either mounted by a large halo-disc or are without it. They rest on the head like a majestic crown, symbolic of splendour and grandeur and complete the make-up of actors, who are turned into a personality extraordinary.

BHARATA NĀṬYA ŚĀSTRA mentions three kinds of crowns for the gods and kings : *Parsvagata*, *Mastaki* and *Kiriti*. Gods in general, the *Gandharvas*, the *Yaksas*, the *Nagas* and the *Raksasas* get *Parsvagata* crowns; middling gods, *Mastaki* crowns; and superior gods, *Kiriti* crowns. *Riṣis* and *Siddhas* are provided with crowns made up of locks of hairs (*késa-mukuta*), and *brahmacāris* have a crown of matted hair (*jatā-mukuta*).

In Kathakaḷi, these crowns have undergone minor modifications—rather, are reversed in some respects. Two major head-dresses known to this dance-drama are *Kéśabharam Kīritam* and *Muṭi*. In the former, a circular disc is mounted at the back of the hollow cap-like cone. It has circles within circles of variegated colours—almost a mosaic of white, red and green. Several tiny metallic tassels, bits of mirror and glass are set in the tiers of the head-gear. Its back is plain. The disc is big in the case of vile and wicked characters of regal dignity, like Rāvaṇa and Śakūni; a small disc is mounted on a head-dress used by other demoniac characters. *Muṭi* is without a disc and resembles a conical dome corresponding to the coronet of the hair of sages and is worn by virtuous characters, and divine agents and allies like Narada, the wandering minstrel. It is of two varieties—*Vaṭṭa Muṭi* and *Kāri Muṭi*. *Vaṭṭa Muṭi* has a protruding fringe added to the cone which gives the look of an umbrella. It is worn by Hanumān. *Kāri Muṭi* head-dress has an open top and is used by characters like Sūrpanakhā, hunters, etc.

In the case of Gods, like Rama and Kṛṣ́ṇa, *Muṭi* is a coronet beautifully carved and decked with peacock feathers. It has no spherical crown attached. With the *cuṭṭinaṭa* runs an Indian-red ribbon at the base of the head-dress on the forehead above the *cuṭṭi*. The decorated hem harmoniously vibrates with the facial make-up and the head-gear.

Of the *Paccha* characters, the distinctive make-up and costume of Kṛṣ́ṇa explained earlier, have their own grandeur. The beauty of his grooming is contained in a balanced use of colours—the head-dress decked with peacock plumes gives a significant sympathetic and rhythmical use of the vividly yellow skirt broken by red flaps hanging on either side of the waist. His complexion is *sāñvarā* and, therefore, his vest is deep-blue, over which hang from round the neck a *vana-mālā* of variegated colours.

Of *Minnukku* characters, the *riṣis* put on a "helmet" sort of covering provided with a protruding gourd-like ball on the top. Women have no head-dress, except hair-do which supports, like an umbrella-staff, the veil.

TĀḌIS : Enormous, high and conical hats, instead of head-dresses, are worn by bearded characters. Their brims are wide and shape is irregular. In the case of Hanumān's white hat, numerous tiny metal pieces and bells hang underneath the brim and shine during a performance as the actor gesticulates. These are usually made of brass, though at places they are of silver and have no more than decorative function. The hat is made of light wood. Its base cap is mounted by a miniature dome, reflecting the *motif* of a Buddhist *zedi*. It ends in a end-like finial.

RED BEARD : The enormous head-gear that crowns the red-beard characters is mounted by a spectacular halo-like disc almost three feet in diameter. Its rim is surrounded by red wool. Tall actors, six feet or above, with histrionic ability suitably adjust themselves for these role-types, without looking uncouth.

BLACK-BEARD : The forest demon or the aboriginal hunter, wears head-dress with its crown bordered with peacock feathers rising over the figure like an expanding lotus capital of

Egypt. Śiva, as *kīrata* (hunter) out to rouse Arjuna from his yogic meditation, wears this head-dress.

KĀRI : The head-gear of a Kāri character is substantially the same as worn by the black-beard.

A "CRITIQUE"

Head-dresses give a balancing effect to the 'get-up' of characters. They lend height proportionately to the volume, increased by wearing overcoats, ornaments and the skirt. The circular disc is not merely an artistic triumph, but also a structural necessity. Without it, a structural void would be created, for a merely peaked crown will upset the balance of the role-types and impair supple movements. The overflowing skirt, the made-up oval face, and the head-dress with a disc, which synchronizes with the rhythmic sway of the skirt below, provide a setting which alone could have been devised for the actor's angular hand manipulations and split-leg movements on the outer edges of the foot.

Massivity of red and white beard characters is obtained by wearing large fur-coats, bigger head-dresses and more ample skirts which befit bold features of *cuttis*.

Well groomed actors appear on the stage with certain preliminaries such as "curtain call", cries and laughter. The first two traits are peculiar to demons, and the last one differs from character to character and from occasion to occasion. Virtuous and saintly role-types, for instance, gently smile, in keeping with their nature; Katti and Tadi characters give loud laughter, a natural outcome of their sneering and boisterous nature. The music synchronizes with the situation and exhibition of individual traits.

During the long interval when an actor is being groomed, he refreshes his memory about the role he has to play. He reconciles his entire nature with the nature of the role-type and the various colour schemes which he puts on. There is complete transformation in the mental and physical look. Consciously or unconsciously he stores up emotional tensions which are unleashed during the recital. The head-gear is the last item that he puts on after due salutation;

it is sacred to him. Now he steps out of his normal self into a transformed one. He is no longer the man he is; he has the cast in him the role he is to play. To him the colours are no longer symbolic of a character but are an essential part of his being. Look at him in the "green room", he walks in the gait of the character. If he is a Ravana, he behaves thus; if he is a Rama he is virtuous alike. To the audience he presents a language of colours; the language of the hand-poses merely relates the story.

He is a complete Kathakaḷi actor.

CHAPTER XV

KATHAKAḶI'S STAGE

In talking about a theatrical stage, the attention goes on to the stage properties, scenes and other accessories. But the Kathakaḷi's stage needs no more than an area of about 20 sq. ft.—generally 5 ft. long and 4 in. broad—a big brass lamp, a medium-size wooden stool, a portable curtain about 12 ft. long and 8 ft. wide and a few accessories of realism.

No skill is required in the construction of a Kathakaḷi's stage which is Pandal-like, decorated with green leaves and flowers. Dais is not necessarily an essential part of the stage; a level ground in the open or in the courtyard is enough to be converted into the Kathakaḷi's "stage". The space in the front of the stage is covered by mats for the audience. The open auditorium is served with soft twilight of a well-shaped bell-metal brass lamp put in the middle of the fore part of the "stage" at a height of 4 feet. It is fed by coconut oil. Two thick clusters of intertwined wicks, the thicker one facing the stage and the other the audience, provide the requisite light and create the necessary light and shade effects. It is for this reason that Kathakaḷi actors stand in the centre of the stage to relate a story : after each passage or interlude they move in *Kalasam*; and stand at a side or sit on the only stool on the stage. It is an all-purposeful stage property. An actor may stand on it if he is to convey, in the course of a play, that he is standing on a mountain or in the heaven. He might rest a foot on it to give him an exalted appearance. Some role-types might lift it in the air to proclaim their greatness and prowess or to symbolise a mountain as in the case of Hanuman. The Monkey God having failed to recognize the mountain herb which alone could regain consciousness to Lakshmana when he was struck by the *Brahmastra* hurled by the ten-headed Ravana, lifts the mountain in the air and flows down to the battlefield. When an actor sits on it, it is only during long narratives by other role-types; but before sitting on it, if it is his first time to do so, he respectfully touches it to pay his respects to the gods and to distinguished persons in the audience.

As a play is to begin, musicians stand on the left side of the audience (sometimes on the right too) and play the *Suddha Maddala,* the first rhythmic prelude which announces the starting of a play. The weird call of the drummers has already drawn an ocean of grey shapeless crowd sitting in trance with expectancy. The more exuberant, the devoted and mischievous have overflowed on the stage itself. The colourful story of the three Worlds is to be unfolded; two stage-hands appear walking up to the front holding a thick oblong curtain made of satin or silk pieces each dubbed in a different bright colour. In its centre is embroidered an image of Śiva or Viśnu or a large full-blown lotus. There is no back-drop or scenery. Actors enter the stage, with or without "a curtain-call".

Kathakaḷi accessories for realism are few. A red liquid is often used for blood. Apart from other visible aids, Kathakaḷi realistically mimes all actions whether they are prescribed on the stage or not. Here the appeal is not merely to imagination but also to the naked eye. Symbolism, therefore, yields to graphical mimetics. If it were not for such external aids or realism in Kathakaḷi, a dance-drama's intimate association with Kéraḷa folk-art would have been completely negatived.

VĀCIKĀBHINAYA

(Action of Rhythm and Music)

Vācikābhinaya enjoys a secondary position in Kathakaḷi, yet its music is heavily immersed in the dance music of the South—*Padams*. Its songs may be narrative in content—and *sangitgatha* in form—or mixed up with dialogues in prose. Today, the style of singing Kathakaḷis has lost inspiration and effectiveness, due to indifference and crude way of training imparted by inadequate musicians. In the zeal for propagating Kathakaḷi, this important limb of the whole art need not be overlooked. To befit its magnificent fund of *abhinaya*, Kathakaḷi music should rise from a mere mechanical "telling" or narrative device to an emotional beauty aid.

It is the Kathakaḷi musician who is one of the highest paid artiste in a repertoire.

CHAPTER XVI

RHYTHM AND MUSIC

LIKE the stage properties, the Kathakaḷi orchestra standing in a semi-circle behind the actors is a light item. But its music is demoniacally vigorous. Two to four drums of different kinds are an important constituent of the orchestra. Then there are flutes and a gong with the chief singer. One of the musicians plays on the harmonium, the other might hold a small *tambura* or a triangle of steel, and a third one is a time-beater. All musicians stand; the harmonium player keeps the instrument on a table.

To the conservative, this orchestral constitution might be elaborate, for in his days he had seen yet a smaller group of musicians. The needs of the stage have obviously changed—they are ever changing, indeed—and Kathakaḷi, as a dynamic art, has tried to keep pace with them.

Kéraḷa art developed a variety of musical instruments, originally divided into three categories according to their utility. *Gītāṅga* instruments were those which accompanied vocal music only. Instruments used exclusively as accompaniments to dancing were called *Nṛtāṅga vādya.* In the third category of *Ubhayāṅga vādya* were musical instruments found suitable for both vocal music and dancing. All these instruments were collectively called *Īsaikkaruri.* According to their constitutional make-up, these were of four kinds, viz., *Thorkaruri* (leather instruments), *Thulaikkaruri* (instruments provided with holes), *Narambukkaruri* (string instruments), and *Midattukkaruri* (throat or wind instruments).

THORKARURI : Leather instruments usable in any performance, according to *Śilapādikāram* (The 'Silver Anklet') are as follows :

1.	Perikai	...A kind of kettle-drum.
2.	Padakam	...Tom-tom.
3.	Idakkai	...A double-headed drum.
4.	Maddalam	...A kind of drum.
5.	Udukkai	...A hand drum like the hour-glass.
6.	Challikai	...A kind of large drum.
7.	Karadikai	...A kind of drum.
8.	Thimilai	...A drum of fishermen.
9.	Kudamula	...An earthenware drum.
10.	Thakkai	...Tabour.
11.	Ganapparai	...A kind of drum.
12.	Damarukam	...A little drum.
13.	Thannumai	...A kind of drum.
14.	Thadari	...
15.	Anthari	...
16.	Mulavu	...A drum in general.
17.	Chandravalayam	...A kind of drum.
18.	Monthai	...A drum open at an end.
19.	Murasu	...A variety of kettle-drum.
20.	Kan-vidu-thambu	...A kind of drum.
21.	Nisalam	...One-headed drum.
22.	Thudumai	...A kind of drum.
23.	Chiruparai	...A small drum.
24.	Adakkam	...A kind of drum.
25.	Thakunicham	...
26.	Viraleru	...
27.	Pakam	...
28.	Upankam	...
29.	Nalikai	...
30.	Parai	...A big drum.
31.	Thuti	...A small drum tapering from each and forming a small neck in the centre.

Of the percussion instruments those that are even now in use in Kéraḷa are Bheri, Damarukam, Mrdangam, Gajjali, Dolak, Thuti, Udukku, Chenta, Thimila, Idekka, Thakil, Ghata, Vadyam, Miiavu, Murasu and Parai.

NARAMBUKKARURI : Once the *yal* was the chief stringed instrument. It had many forms, varying in the number of strings on the frets. The *periyal* had 21 strings; the *makarayal*, 19 strings; *Sakvadyal*, 14 strings; and *Senkottiyal*, seven strings. During the reign of Swathi Thirunal Maharaja (1813-1847 A.D.), stringed instruments used in Kathakaḷi were the *Sarangi*, the *Swarabhith* and the *Gottuvadyam.*

Stringed instruments now in use in Kéraḷa music are the *nanthuni*, the *vina*, the *tamburu* and the violin.

MIDATTUKKARURI : Of the wind instruments, the flute (known in old Tamil as the *Vankiyam*) was the most important. Other variations of the flute included *Kontaiyankulal*, *Ampalanthinkulal* and *Mullaiyankulal.*

Wind instruments used in Kéraḷa music today are Nagaswaram, Nedumkulal, Kurumkulal, Murali, Pullankulal, Sruthi, Pampu Nagaswaram, Mukha Vina and Kompu.

ORCHESTRAL COMPOSITION

DRUMS : Of the drums used in Kathakaḷi, the *Cenda*, suspended by a cotton thong or a leather strap from round the neck, is played with two slightly up-turned bamboo sticks by both hands. It looks something like the trap drum of the West and beats on its top produce a shrill, high staccato sound. Its beats can be heard up to a long distance. The *Maddalam*, fastened to the waist by a cotton belt, corresponds with the *mrdangam* is played on both ends by both hands—the right-hand fingers being covered with metal thimbles to produce powerful and sharp sound, and the left hand holds a stick. The manipulation of both the ends does not make the sound sharper than the *Cenda's*, because the sound waves of the former collide somewhere inside the hollow stem of the elongated *maddalam.* In the latter, the sound wave travels up to the other end without hindrance.

To an actor, the drums are sacred; and he respectfully touches them with both hands and then places them on his forehead. The *Cenda* is not operated upon when women characters, other than she-demons, act, for soft music is played for them. When both drums join in producing wild sound, often they serve the chocorographic purpose, like creation of the sound effect of thunder, storm, patter of dripping water, etc. When monstrous rhythm is generated, probably there is a scene of earthquake or the wrath of Śiva—some destruction is symbolised; the softer beats might signify an amorous situation. In effect, the drums charge the atmosphere of a Kathakaḷi play and serve that function which a music serves in the modern dance and drama.

GONG : The thick, small and round, metal-alloy plate, which the singer holds by a thread-loop running through a hole pierced in its bent rim, is beaten by a small stick. Its major function is to give rhythmic beats; it is otherwise dull, unresonant. The sound of the gong is regulated to suit the requirements of the situation. A pair of cymbals heighten the effect of the gong's music. To intensify dramatic effects, sometimes a conch is used. For instance, the arrival of Kṛṣṇa, the messenger of the Pāṇḍavas, at the court of the Kauravas on the eve of the battle of Kurukshétra, is broadcast by blowing a conch. The *Tāmburā* or the harmonium is used as an accompaniment to the singers.

SINGERS : Instrumentalists apart, a group of two or three singers stand in the orchestra. What is sung is repeated on the instruments. The songs are based on the old modes of melodies of Karnātak music called *Sopana-rīti* sung in the Kéraḷa temples. It was distinct from the concert style. It is narrative, not ornamental. It is a distinct style for the distinct purpose of the dance-drama. Moods in a song determine the mode of melody; what singers sing is communicated by actors; flourishes serve as dashes in the process of gesticulation; an actor completes *abhinaya* within this time. Every couplet of the song or the line of the dialogue is repeated till the actor transcribes it in gestures. There is in Kathakaḷi music a complete understanding between the rhythm of the drum, the sound of the gong, the musical mode (*raga*), mood (*bhava*) of the song and the acting of the actor.

Kathakaḷi's operatic songs have exerted considerable influence of Caitanya's devotional compositions. Singing is extremely energetic in the medium tempo. Not necessarily, it may be in tune, partly because vocalists have to shout at the pitch of their voices to make themselves audible in the face of violent beats of the drums. A single set of singers and drummers being unable to withstand the strain of eight hours' Kathakaḷi play, relieving groups of performers take positions every two or three hours. The shift-system becomes necessary for more than one reason : Fatigue is there, but certain songs require special throats for providing proper music. Like an actor, a singer may forget himself and walk up to the former to pour down the song unto his ears. It may mark an emotional climax of a story wherein the singer is atuned with the actor.

Musical pantomime is not a singular feature with Kathakaḷi, the Védic man recited the tenets of the Holy Book with the aid of symbolic gestures. He atuned his mental faculties with the Not-Self and transplanted inner-surges on the life manifest.

Talking of the Sanskrit drama, available evidence tells the story of a highly developed art of *mimesis* (acting-dancing) in ancient India. Bhāśa, Kālidās, Bhāvabhūti—all point to it. Whether all that they wrote conformed to the canons of *Bharata Nāṭya Śāstra*, is a different question. What matters most is that the *Śāstra* deals with the four "actions" of an actor—physical or gestural, emotional, musical and colorific. These individually cover a world of life and activities. The entire expressionist language of the mute is covered by the gestures of the mind—intuitive, imaginative and impulsive—by emotions; of the dialogues—by songs, and of the costume and make-up—by the colours. These are interdependent. A balance is struck between the situation and the dialogue. A woman in love scarcely speaks; her tender modesty enjoins upon her to express the feeling emotionally. It is an overwhelming experience within, which cannot be adequately related in words. To project her mind telepathically to the beloved, she used the normal medium of communication—the eyes. It is supplemented by amorous gait and certain other movements of the limbs which pulsate with the emotional surge. The artiste, who is an interpreter of a character, rather than the "victim" himself or herself, has a difficult role to execute. The more atuned he or she is to the content of the story, the better is the acting through which the feelings are manifest. His or her is the greatest sacrifice: the individual personality is reduced to a naught to recreate a personality of the role-type. Accordingly, if mentally alert and at home with the stage, the artiste enacts (*nṛtyaté*) or spoils (*vṛthā*) the role. Emotional causes and effects being important for dramatic suspense and climax and the drama as a whole, the artiste was ordained to attain *sādhanā* (wholehearted dedication to and attainment of art) for the realization of the art. Like a devotee he sat at the master's feet to acquire the knowledge of regulated impulses. The thoughts that came to him in prose were transcribed in the poetry of gestures. In this task, he freely borrowed from the behaviours of the nature, birds and animals. He had the power of observation and assimilation of a matured thinker and the impulse of a child to ape. He observed virtue in all good—the good that revealed to him in green and white colours of Nature and a section of the birds, like the dove, the swan and the *hamsa*. He gave the observations an art bent and adopted them *in toto*. The love-making scenes, for instance, embody the gestural language of a couple of doves. The sound they produce and the movements they make during courtship were lifted in full to be produced in music and physical actions.

The ferocity of the ferocious, wild animal and creepers like the cobra might have yielded the blood-red and black colours, shrieks, jumps and pincer movements accompanied with thuds. The twinkling of the stars, the sun-set, and sun-rise, the storm, the peacock dancing on a cloudy day, the rains—all these and many other instinctive, and natural phenomenon have contributed substantially in the building up of *Lōk-dharma* or a realistic gestural language. This includes ornaments, etc. worn in the everyday life. To it were added, at a later period, the conventional gestures, called *Nāṭya-dharma* or the gestures which the needs of the stage require, such as huge costumes, make-up, and theatrical accessories.

A highly developed *āñgikābhinaya* suppressed *vācikā* as a mode of expression. The triumph for this goes to Kathakaḷi.

Kathakaḷi has produced some great singers and drummers who have enriched the dance-drama. Legendary amongst the master-singers are Maṇu Bhāgavatār, Gōpāl Kṛśṇa Bhāgavatār and Śivarāma Bhāgavatār; among the drummers are Chittan Pattar and his nephew Venkichan Pattar; and among the *Ceṇḍa* players are Cheenu Pattar, Subrāmanyan Iyer, Kuṭṭan Marar and Kaḳkoor Kunjan Maraṛ. Among the well-known singers today are Venkita-Kṛśṇa Bhāgavatār, Nīlakanṭan Unnithan and Kéśavan Nāir.

CHAPTER XVII

TALAS (TIME MEASURES) USED IN KATHAKAḶI

TALA marks the rhythm of music—a rhythm that tends sound to be harmonious and divisible into a time. Every gesture has to be rhythmical for its graceful manifestation of the purpose of dance. The great scholar on the art of Sangitha says :

The greatness of tala (or time measures) depends upon giving definite rhythmical time divisions of compositions and then to indicate the various beats (strokes) and the waved off beat (i.e., where the division falls but no beat is given—a division which is technically known a khali). Tala is an essential component of Gita (vocal), Vadhya (instrumental), and Nrt́ya (pantomime).

Therefore, we can say that the purpose of tala is to give time beats. A musical or a dance composition without time divisions in its rhythm is no composition as such.

In Sanskrit works mention of tala is made according to the metrical divisions. In tala measures Sangita Ratnakar mentions the use of the terms Plupta, Guru, Laghuviram, Laghu, Drutaviram, and Drut.

Plupta	consists of	12	intervals
Guru	,,	8	,,
Laghuviram	,,	5	,,
Laghu	,,	4	,,
Drutviram	,,	3	,,
Drut	,,	2	,,

1. Talastala pratisthayamitighatirghjsmratah
Githan vadhyan tatha nrtyan yatastaleh pratishthitim.
—KALLINATH

2. Talah kala Kriyamanam. —PANDIT AMARSINGH

This type of division is like the division of poetry. All talas have originated according to the above intervals, e.g., Nishankhateentala has 44 intervals (matras) with two Pluptas (to be indicated with the mark s'), two Gurus (indicated with s) and one Laghu (indicated as I). Thus, Nishankhateentala will appear as :

ś ṡ S S I

Mishravarnatala has 71 matras with Drutas (indicated as O), Drutvirams (indicated as O' '), Plupta, Guru and Laghu. Thus it would appear as :

O O O O" O O O O" O O O O" Ś S O O S I S

All compositions had to be set on this principle of Guru, Laghu, etc.

The origin of these tala "natures" seems to have been from the ups and downs of the thoughts of the hermits who in the process of their meditation experienced slow, steady or swift flow of the screens of God realization. Plupta, as the name implies, indicates the retention of Kal (time) in the rhythm of any flow, whether upwards or downwards. It is further suggested by an ancient work that tala derives its existence from the voice of birds. Nilakantha (blue bird) emits one *matra* note; crow gives two *matras* notes, peacock three *matras*; reptile one-half *matra*. The following measurements are also given :

2	Anus	equal to	1	Drut
2	Druts	"	1	Laghu
2	Laghus	"	1	Guru
3	Gurus	"	1	Plupta
10	Pluptas	"	1	Pal

One Plupta being of three *matras*, ten pluptas equal to thirty *matras*, that is to say one Pal equals to thirty *matras*. This follows that a full weight note of one Pal has a retention of 24 seconds in the English standard time, i.e., one standard unit of Kal (time) will finish on the expiry of the 24th second. This is a correct measure.

Sarangdev maintains that talas have two divisions, viz., Margi variety of *talas* and Desi variety of *talas*. In the former division he classifies the following talas :

Cancatputa, Sampakwesteka, Sutpitaputraka and Cacpura.

He also mentions 120 Desi varieties prevalent during his time. These *talas* are not practised now.

Mastery over rhythm was achieved during the time of Bharata, Sarangdev and other ancient Sanskrit authors, because besides the above divisions of talas into times of Guru, Laghu, etc., mention is also made of the minutest sub-divisions of a metrical composition. Tala classification could be made according to *laya* (rhythm), i.e., Bilambat, Madhya, or Drut layas. According to interval divisions these may be termed as Adagio or Allegro, Moderato or Presto.

The life blood of Sangita is *tala* and the Sum (or the most prominent position of the bar with the heaviest weight) is the "soul" of tala. The various diversions—leaves and cuts—from the Sum are termed as Ghatt, Anaghatts, etc., but in the end every musician and dancer has to fall on the same "flow" of the Sum. The subtle sub-divisions of matras or intervals, or the permutation of these into fractional measures of time are known as Arhi, Kuarhi, Tatham, Tiya, etc. These cuts are peculiar to Indian art of Sangita and are its "fineries" (so far as the *tala* aspect is concerned), because, without impairing the rhythmic flow of the time, the *laya* is exhibited in different ways. An actor who attains perfection in it (*laya*), is a true artist.

The rhythm of the creation of the universe, of the cosmic dance of Shiva and all such other dances was guided by the beat of the drum of Shiva. Either from a rhythmical composition, the *tala* is adjusted or within the limits of a particular *tala*, the composition is adjusted. In every case a composition has *laya* (rhythm), *matra* (interval), *aghats* (strokes), sum (the first most prominent stroke).

The *tala* measures of the north and the south differ, not in principle but in practice. Apparently they may seem to differ in principle from the modern practices of *talas*, but all are based upon the principles of Sastras mentioned above. In Kathakaḷi generally five main varieties of *talas* are used. They consist of eight, ten, fourteen, seven or six intervals. The following are the chief and popular *talas* used therein :

1 Kalah kriya parichinna tala shabdeh na bhadyateh.

Adi or Chempata, Champa or Jumpa, Atanta or Ata. Tripata or Muriatanta, and Panchari or Roopaka.

Their swaroop or description is as follows :

Adi : consists of eight intervals. It has three beats and two waves (i.e., leaves). This whole in Western terminology may be said as eight crotchets in three bars.

Champta : has 10 intervals with three beats and one let off. This is quavers in three bars.

The tala with 14 intervals and four strokes and two leaves is termed as Atanta.

Tripata consists of seven intervals with stroke divisions on the first, fourth, and sixth and leaves on the fifth and seventh.

Panchari tala has six intervals. Beats fall on the first and fifth interval, while the leave is given on the sixth interval. The above description can thus be illustrated :

Adi	...	/O O O / X / X	... 8 intervals.
(Chempata)		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	
Champa	...	/O O O O O O / / X	10 ”
(Jumpa)		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Atanta	...	/O O O O / O O O O / X / X	
(Ata)		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	
		...	... 14 intervals.
Tripata	...	/ O O / X / X	... 7 „
(Muriatanta)		1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
Panchari	...	/ O O O / X ...	... 6 „
(Roopaka)		1 2 3 4 5 6	

Note : / represents a beat of hand; O represents counting of fingers; X waving of the hand.

An actor during his course of training practises over these talas and when he has acquired perfection in laya (rhythm) he attempts to acquire mastery over the more difficult, subtle and intricate ones.

The *bols* or wordings of these *talas* are heavy, powerful and high sounding, unlike those used in the North. The *bols* are like : *thunga*, *karan*, *gir-gir*, *kurming*, *dharrang*, *dirak-dhirak*, etc. The wordings differ in their nature according to the sentiment to be expressed at a particular moment. Where heroic sentiment is to be expressed strong and powerful wordings are let out, and if Srngar Rasa is to be displayed smooth and erotic steps are used.

Various types of drums are used. In the North *tabla*, *mrdanga*, *pakhawaj*, etc., are the instruments for *tala* measures, while Perikai, Padakam, Idakkai, etc., are found for this purpose in the South. Some of the drums have one side covered with leather while others have both the sides covered up. In dance, different varieties of drums are used for different occasions (or "positions" in the dance).

From the above reading we gather that the subtlety of dramatic (as well as the musical) art consists in a well-balanced behaviour of *tala* in the exquisite exposition of the rhythm of the dancer. This rhythm does not merely mark time but space as well and it is not merely the foot stroke with which we are concerned but all the movements (and gestures) of the actor. Nature cannot dance till Shiva wills it; He beateth His drum and all pulsating Matter dances in Glory and in rhythm with the Eternal voice revolving and encircling the entire universe. He who cometh in it, dances in tune, harmony and rhythm of Eternity.

ABHINAYA PRADUṚBHAVA

(*Kathakaḷi Practice*)

All said and done about the whole technique of Kathakaḷi, the practical executions might take the reader with surprise, because of the sequences in which various items and phases of a story are delineated. How a dance-drama begins and ends form a part of the study of this book. Some anecdotes and stories are given towards the end of the book as well.

CHAPTER XVIII

ENACTMENT OF A DANCE-DRAMA

THE stage for a Kathakaḷi performance is set.

Incessant, vigorous drumming as a rhythmic prelude called *Suddha Maddalam* begins. Inhabitants of areas within the ear-shot of the drumming gather in the "auditorium".

Drumming concludes.

Two stagehands carry a curtain to the centre of the stage.

Invocatory verses—like *Jarjar* or *Rangapuja*—are sung and prayers offered for the success of the show.

Two dancers representing Maya and Sakti execute *Todayam*, a devotional, invocatory dance piece, followed by *Purappadu* or the preliminary, ceremonious stepping in pure dance by a green-face character and his mate.

A colourful canopy is seen approaching the actors as if from nowhere and is held over them. Two peacock fans and *camaras* (fly-whisks) are by their sides.

In *Todayam*, the young dancers keep the normal posture of the body with arched back and splayed knees and arms held in *utvikshepa* (outstretched) in front. The key movements of the hand, so characterstic of Kathakaḷi, follow in two alternative positions : first, palm facing the audience and the fingers held in Mudra,[27] and, second, palm upwards, and the hand rather in *ardhachandra*.[28] If the right hand is held in the first position, the left is in the second. Now the dancers advance. Eye-balls roll evanescently. Glances are cast right to left.[29]

The curtain is not lowered to reveal the identity of the role-types.

They are celestial beings partly hidden behind the curtain.

Their enchanting dance begins : the eyes and eye-brows accompany bodily flexions; every dance-piece executed has elegance and spark.

Musicians gear themselves up.

Singers sing a song from the *Gita Govinda—Manjutara*—and the drummers display great skill in drumming (*Melappadam*—literally, to synchronise with the song).

The dance-drama opens now.

Here is *Tiranokku*; there is *Kummi*; or there might be a *srngar drsya* (amorous scene).

Many Kathakaḷis begin with the hero and the heroine in a pleasure garden. Where a Kathakaḷi does not open thus, it has this scene somewhere in the body. The story that follows this scene unfolds a high degree of human psychology and emotional causes and is one of the many stories, drawn from Hindu mythology wherein titanic wars are waged between Good and Evil. The story may be a requited love sequence of Rukmini-Krsna romance or an unrequited of Rambha-Ravana love, or a romance in which emotions and human passions are dissected as in Nala-Damayanti; it may be a comedy, or a triumph of labour over laxity with an exhortation on the fulfilment of *karma*, or a tale of supreme achievement through penance and austerity like Arjuna's bid to win Siva's mighty weapon *Pasu-pata*, or an episode from the life of a devotee, like *Krsna Sudama*, or the story revolves round some heroic exploits of Hanuman, the Monkey God or of Bhima, the Hindu Hercules. Bhima may be in search of a miraculous flower to satisfy the whims of his wife, Draupadi, or to fulfil the vow he took to avenge upon Dussasana the insult he (Dussasana) inflicted on her, the Pancali (literally, a resident of Pancal). If it is a religious theme it might abound in piety and truth of King Rugmangada towards the temptress, Mohini. The story, in brief, may be one of the several episodes from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagvata* or the *Puranas*, drawn to be enacted through the art of Kathakaḷi, enchantingly, vigorously and dramatically.

It progresses.

After every dialogue, the actor moves into a punctuation. The story is divided into a number of *caranas* which serve as 'dance-phrases' and are concluded by *Kalasas* (dance-conclusions) followed by *lata-hasta*. These 'conclusions' are usually presented in different *tala* or time measures and the tempo of each *tala* conforms to the mood preceding or the sentiment invoked in the *Barana*. For instance, if a dialogue has been rendered by Ravana, at its conclusion he walks cross-wise on the floor in the Tandava gait to present Kalasas. The actor faces in four directions and takes the right foot forward one step; left foot joins it. Similarly, he walks on the right side and backwards. On the left side, the left foot is stretched one step, and the right foot joins it. The process is repeated. Tempo increases in the whole context of the play. After an important *Carana*, the actor takes *Kalasas* twice or thrice, each piece being rendered with *mudras* to indicate the emotions which flowed through the concluding part of the *Carana*. He takes easy leaps, quick turns, and swift steps; makes angular movements of the arms; turns the wrists, interpolating fingers to weave exquisite hand-patterns and finally merges into the build-up of a following *Kalasa*. The *Asta-Kalasa* is the most subtle one : it is expounded through eight different rhythmic measures in the fast tempo, establishing the terpsichorean abilities of the actor.

In the whole play, the actor makes angular movements. His stances are rarely erect. For balancing his body, he stands with spread out, split legs; hands are bent at the elbow and the palms are placed on the hips. The posture has some majesty about it, apart from the fact that from this position he starts in dynamic actions without upsetting his balance. The foot is not held in *sampad* (i.e., flat in contact with the floor), but is tilted on its outer edge. It is one position, which, important as it is in a dramatic performance of this type, enables an actor to be constantly on the alert; flat foot will restrain the agility and alacrity needed in a mute dance-drama, the virile and vigorous movements weaving difficult patterns of rhythm of sustained strength, each throbbing with energy.

Acting by female characters generally and by both male and female role-types in love scenes, has some gentility about it. As distinct from generally the vigorous dancing, by male characters, the female characters give a mellowing and tenderly dance. There is an essential liveliness, and femininity in it. It is the dance *lasya* and its amorous traits are particularly in evidence in love scenes, called *Patingattam*. Even heroes make *lasya* movements.

Kathakaḷi has developed exclusively *lasya* dances or *pure* dance pattern, such as Kummi and Sari. *Lasya* dances by men display sympathy and love.

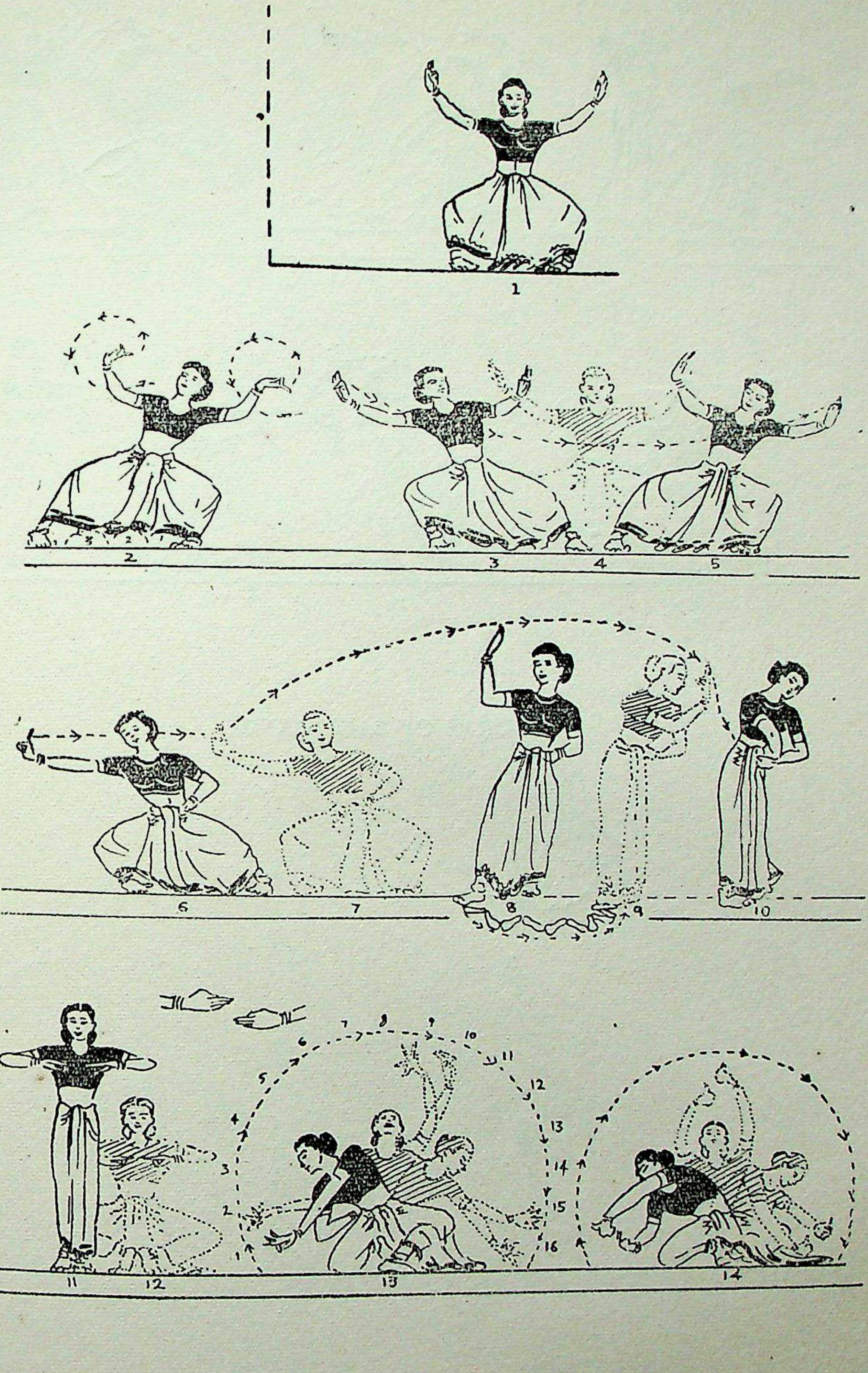
Recapitulating, in Kathakaḷi performance, an actor has to behave in nine distinct ways, which are :

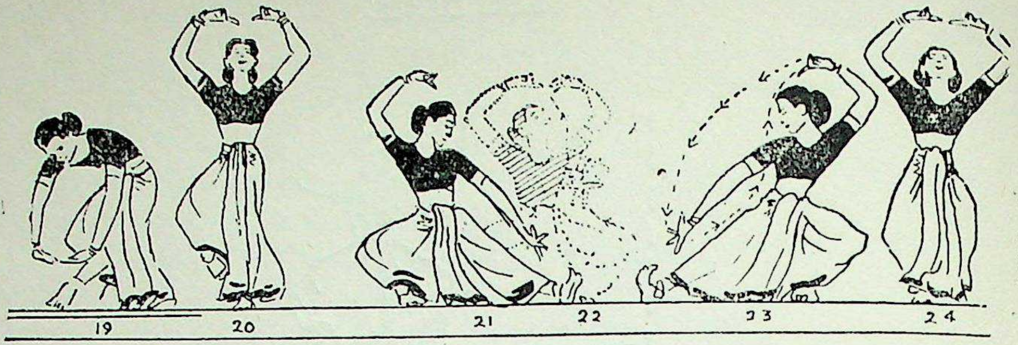
(i) Make-up,
(ii) Costuming,
(iii) Debut,
(iv) Gesticulation, basic stance and *hasta vinyas*,
(v) Stretching and waving of arms and formation of physical attitudes,
(vi) Foot work,
(vii) Acting,
(viii) Marching,
(ix) Conclusion.

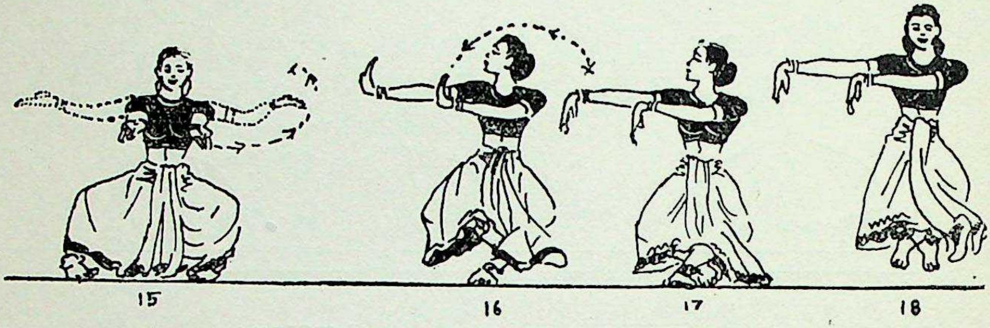
Each object or situation is expressed by him in a number of ways—by *angavikshepas*, glances and gestures. If an actor is to narrate a story of the Mount Kailash, for instance, he first details the colossal mountain itself. His eyes and the body bents and movements draw an imagery of the mountain before the eyes of the audience. He recalls to the minds of the audience, through his gestural language, its outline and, through the eyes, by registering wonder and awe, its immense proportion. He initiates expression with the physical posture shown in Fig. I. Fig. III shows the height of the mountain ("so high it is"). The vastness of the mountain is evident from Figs. IV and V. Suitable *mudras* supplement the actions; the mind follows the eyes to produce *rasa*.

Mudras help here in lucid interpretation, word by word, of the verse of the dialogue sung. There are exact *mudras* for words. For example, an actor has to represent a lotus rising out of water, blooming into a flower, descent and flying away of a bee with honey drawn from it. He is not content with mere conventional symbols.

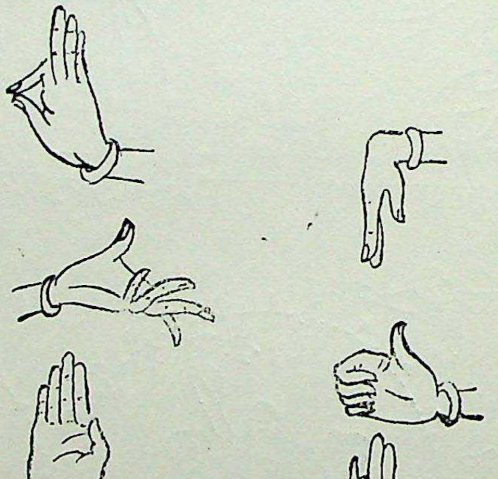
SARI DANCE







MUDRAS OF SARI DANCE



PARVATAM

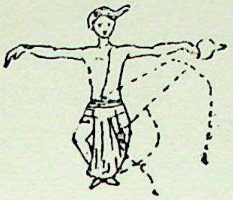


Fig. 1

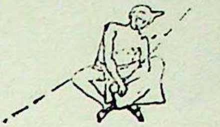


Fig. 2

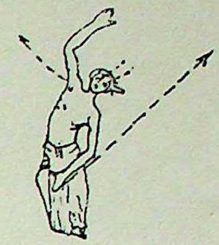


Fig. 3

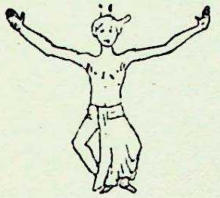


Fig. 4

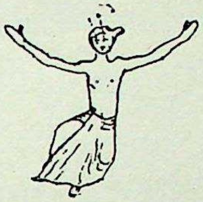


Fig. 5

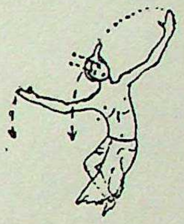


Fig. 6

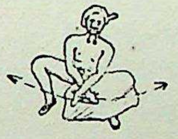


Fig. 7

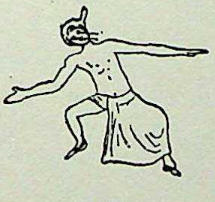


Fig. 8

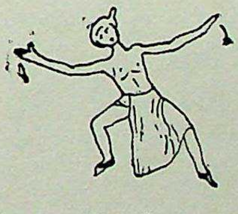


Fig. 9

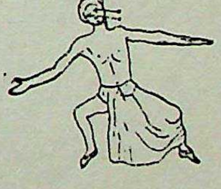


Fig. 10

N.B.—Arrows show the direction of arms and dots the position of the eye glance

There is a double hand-pose for the lotus, but by his *manodharma,* the actor takes the audience in the sphere of suggestivity. He takes a *look* at the lotus (*nokki-kanuka*) and his countenance, gleaming with satisfaction and embracing the warm mood of marvel at the sight of a beauteous object, transmits the lotus to the audience. His hands are held in *musti* and are crosse at the wrists, the right one leaning over the left. This action is followed by a pivotal movement and the release of the fist with fingers released in *Kapota.* The overall suggestion to the audience is that the lotus plant is rising above the water and, while its eyes are fixed on the hands of the actor, the bud blooms into a flower. The drums produce rustling sound that bears the opening of the petals and heighten the situation exceedingly well.

The full blown lotus is in view. Joyous indeed is the actor's face. He brings forth his nostrils to smell how sweet the flavour of the flower is—and emotionally communicates his experience to the audience.

In the midst of the pin-drop silence and the trance that he has cast over the audience, the actor withdraws his right hand and holds it into *Bhramara mudra*, the left hand remains in *ardha-kapota* symbolizing the lotus. The fingers flutter hither and thither symbolizing a wandering bee. It hovers over the lotus : The actor is assisted in his actions by the expressions of the fluttering eyes, in harmony with the bee's flight. It descends on the flower, but, lo ! immediately it flies away only to come back again to sip the honey. The narration of the action is completed by the movements of the hand and the eyes, supplemented by a few stages. The actor portrays the process of sipping by the eye-expressions and a feeling of delight on the face. When the bee rolls away with honey far and far away, the actor's eyes measure the distance in the directions of the flight. The farthest distance being expressed by holding a hand near the temple and above the eye-brow against the expressive eye. When it fades away, the hand drops.

The scene concludes. The audience is awakened out of the trance.

It is *citrabhinaya* or picturisation of an object, to say with Bharata.

Where the physical aspect of an object is not to be conveyed, metaphorical symbols are used. When the golden swan teaches Damyanti, in *Nala-Damyanti Carita*, how to walk gracefully, the Kathakaḷi character presents gaits usually assigned to women-gaits reflecting loveliness, dignity, coyness and such other feminine attributes. This process is called *Padarthabhinaya* or exposition of a *pada* (verse) by expressive actions of *pada* or the foot-works. The youth of Damayanti is expounded by pronounced physical actions describing maturing body and limbs. The hands whirling down backwards to show streaming lustrous hair, the actions of eyes and hands designating the youthful round breasts; and the amorous tilt of the head and a walk on its gait appropriately stimulate other instinctive actions of women.

In *Nala-Damayanti Carita*, Nala tries to overcome many obstacles to his union with Damayanti, and attempts to shake off the timid bashfulness of his beloved. He plays all strategies of love. He leads her to the garden where nature's creations are in an amorous mood. The scene lasts for almost two hours in which the Kathakaḷi role-types give an account of their skill and the greatness of the art : the love breeds, it is nursed, it thrives, thrills, and unites the two souls.

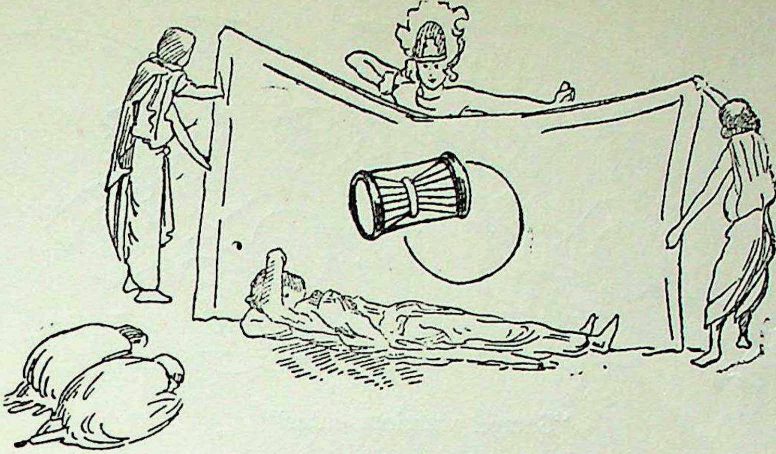
In the Bhima Dussasana battle, the quintessence of Kathakaḷi is brought out. The story revolves round Draupadi, who is humiliated and insulted by Dussasana by dragging her by the hair in the court of the Kauravas. Her hair became untied. Bhima, one of the five Pandava brothers, takes the vow to avenge the insult upon him and until that period her hair remain unknotted. Ultimately, Bhima and Dussasana came to grips. The Kathakaḷi play begins from here and Dussasana enters the stage with *Tiranokku* (curtain-call). A battle rages between the two in which Bhima is victorious. He tears open the entrails of Dussasana and sips the blood by an *Anjali* hand. Bhima and Draupadi recall the incident that led to the vow. He wipes the blood on her hair and re-ties the knot. Both proceed to Kṛṣna and report the success, who, in return, dances a benediction. The story unfolds a wide range of superhuman battle, draws morals and emotional vengeance, creates matrimonial loyalties and sentimental nobility. Technically, though the play starts from a displaced emotional situation, the elements of human emotions are fully portrayed in it. Heroism, fury and disgust are rolled into one Bhima, terrible and tempestuous aspects are in Dussasana, marvel in Draupadi, and pathetic and erotic in Krṣna. Besides, from the curtain look to the benediction dance, the whole gamut of Kathakaḷi's art is presented by them in *tandava* and *lasya*.

Off the conventional Kathakaḷi stage, it would be useful to analyse a dance-drama created by Uday Shankar. It is a pantomime, though in actual staging neither heavy costumes nor such a make-up of Kathakaḷi is employed, nor the technique is entirely Kathakaḷi. However, it presents a creative modification of Kathakaḷi and a reflective assimilation of the different techniques of Indian dancing, from birth to death, (rhythm of life) is Uday Shankar's greatest, though unrealised, pantomime, the story and speeches of which are given below :

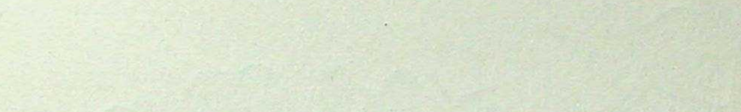
A young man with experience of the world, crushed by the machinery of modern civilisation and victimised by the ravages of vested interest, returns to his village during a festival. In spite of the merriment and dances, real life seems so miserable to him that he finds no happiness. He lies down and analyses the whole situation as the music and song continue in the distance. "I have seen the life in big towns," he muses, "splendour, luxury and meanness, while here the real people of the country, the honest villagers crawl in misery and squalor. For generations they have been suppressed, deceived and tyrannised but do not realise it. My feelings, love and goodwill are ignored, when for years I have planned to save them, to march with them to demand their rights." He is deeply stirred and thinks of the sloka as he gradually dozes to sleep :

Vadhyan dakshadhwara dwanso dvega tyagaya shambhuna
Cakre kautukato nando swati tunburu naradah :

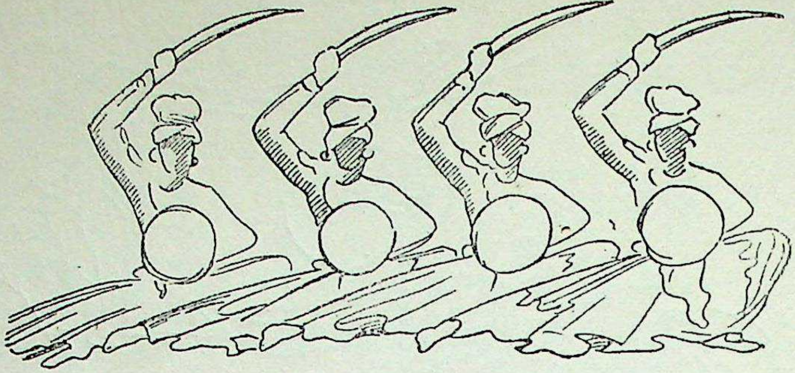
Shiva appears in a terrible mood after slaying Daksha, and creates the sacred drum and other instruments to relieve himself of the wrath that boils inside of him. Apsaras, heavenly nymphs, come to get Shiva's blessing and dance around the dreamer. As they disappear, sacred warriors enter with naked swords as if they were about to slay him. Upon their exit, a young woman appears with all her allure, charm and voluptuousness. He is attracted by her and begins to dance with her in the hope of possessing her. She vanishes as he holds her in his arms. He finds himself among peasants and dances with them. But all leave him and he is alone. The atmosphere is tense with the premonition of coming evil. The young landlord approaches and demands money of him. He has nothing to give him. The landlord whips him mercilessly till she is wounded and bleeding. Suddenly the villagers appear and request him to take the national flag and march at their head to the town to see the superman who has always identified himself with the peasants and is ready to give his life for truth and his country. But death and starvation are stalking them. He does not realise that he is face to face with the superman, and sighs and sobs with the delight of seeing him with pain and agony of heart he complains of all the age-old suffering of the peasants at the hands of their exploiters. The superman consoles him and promises to alleviate the suffering of the peasants. He sees the awakening of women, their courage and sacrifice in the political struggle. While many are sincere, in others he notices hypocrisy, forced amiability and falseness, but he believes that the patriots are arriving to save the land. The superman introduces him to these well-wishers of the country who assure him of all support. As soon as the superman leaves, there is again chaos all around; jealousy, selfishness, intrigue, orthodoxy, gossip and servility become rampant. He looks in vain for help. The crowd becomes monstrous and he feels himself being overwhelmed by the uncertainties which confront him. He wakes up in a daze. The distant song and music still continue leaving him with the unsolved problem but within himself a new hope vanquishes compassion.



"He is deeply stirred and gradually doses to sleep. Shiva appears in a terrible mood"

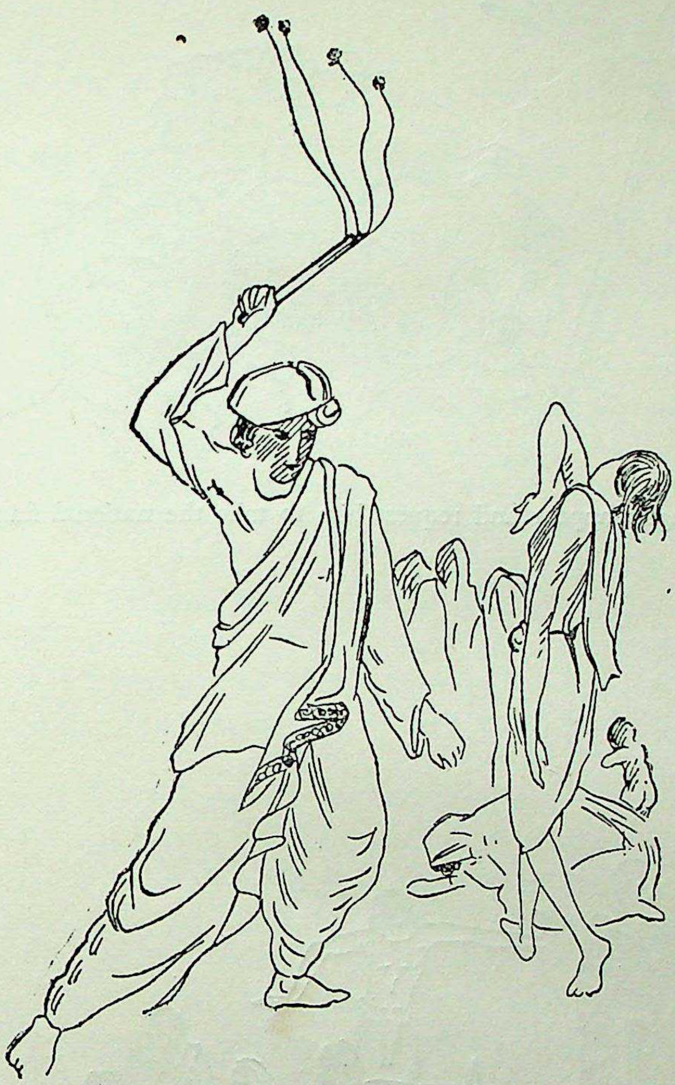


"Apsaras dance around the dreamer"

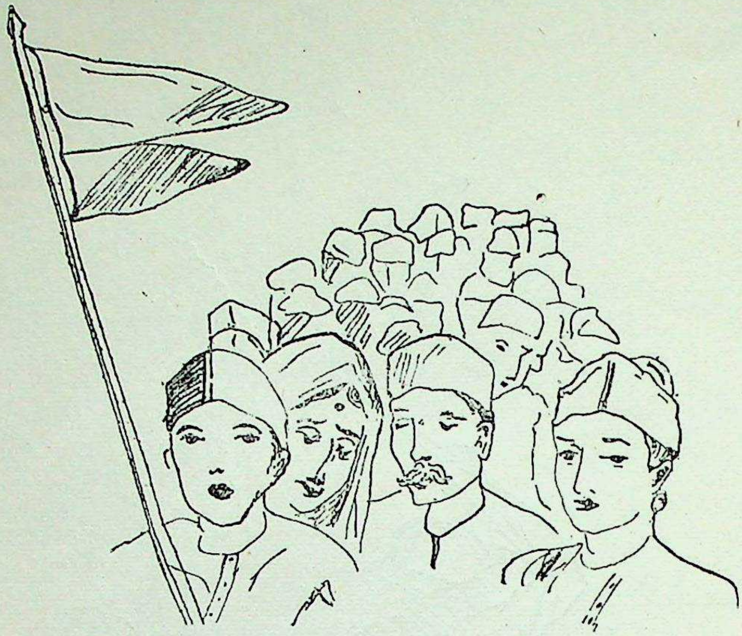


"Sacred warriors enter"

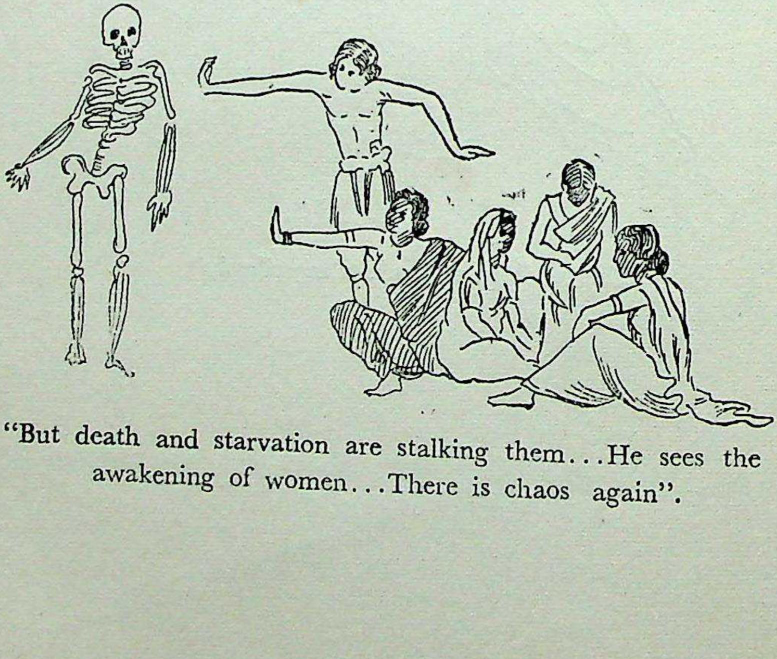
"He is attracted by her...But all leave him...The atmosphere is tense..."



"The landlord whips him mercilessly"



"Villagers appear and request him to take the national flag"



"But death and starvation are stalking them...He sees the awakening of women...There is chaos again".

CHAPTER XIX

THE FUTURE OF KATHAKAḶI

From its present state, Kathakaḷi's future is unpredictable, unless the overall influences that are brought to bear upon it are considered dispassionately and coolly. For one thing is so obviously true about it : Kathakaḷi has ceased to be a regional or a national art confined within the frontiers of Kéraḷa or India; it has outgrown its magnitude and has come to stay as an international art of subtle histrionic qualities. It maintains its old traditional ties with the theatre art and the audience, though the turn of the last century marked the beginning of a period of decadence and oblivion. This was not peculiar to Kathakaḷi alone, for all dances in India have had to face this period of "depression", reckoned with the passage of time between the two World Wars. The resurgence of art after Independence created a gulf between the pristine art tradition and the post-war cultural outlook, which was difficult to be bridged. The present is, therefore, a period of cultural crisis.

Of the many facets of the old tradition still surviving in Kéraḷa is the sounding of the song and beating of the drum from a temple, clamorously advertising to all within the earshot that a Kathakaḷi performance shall be held the following night. The play may last for 16 hours. The performance night presents a spectacular scene. Families old, young and children—drawn from varied social strata—migrate in numbers on foot, hackney carriages, and automobiles to the vast open space for the show. They carry beds for sleeping and milk for babies. The older ones among the audience spread out their beds at the fringe of the open-air "auditorium" and go to sleep after "bribing" the young ones to wake them up at the moment their favourite scene was to be enacted. Before, during and after the play, discussion in the audience is of the common-place character—centering round the story, the actors, the quality of acting by individual characters, success or otherwise of the play and the new favourites. From the highly sensitive and art-conscious people—*Rasikas*—among the audience, a clean assessment and a critical analysis of the dance-drama, its accompaniments and stage decor are available. The older ones get on the nerves of the younger by a cynic's grouse that the standard of performance did not come nearer the shadow of the standard of performance in the days of his father or grandfather.

Elsewhere in the preceding pages it is contended that the composition of the audience for a Kathakaḷi performance is democratically broadbased with the minimum of favours to persons on the management's protocol. This practice stands widely in contrast to favours showered on a few amongst the audience to a dance recital elsewhere in India. Religiosity of the South, too, makes a difference : it presents a contrast to socio-political aristocracy of the North. Kathakaḷi is as much inspired by the people of Kéraḷa, as it inspires them in turn. It is a truly people's art which bespeaks of universal brotherhood.

In its revival, after a brief spell of oblivion caused by economic factors and socio-political confusion, contributions of Maharani Sethu Parabati Bai, Queen-Mother of Travancore; Mahakavi Vallathol, Malabar's poet-laureate; Guru Kunchu Kurup and Guru Gopinath, one time the palace dancer to Maharaja of Travancore are acclaimed by and large. With Mahakavi Vallathol is identified the period of Renaissance during which Guru Gopinath has made ceaseless efforts to raise Kathakaḷi from an art of the open-air to that of the stage.

At the time when the Kathakaḷi tradition had disintegrated and the dance-drama was looked down upon as a means of entertainment for the less civilized over 20 years ago, Mahakavi Vallathol Narayana Menon founded Kéraḷa Kalamandalam (Kéraḷa Academy of Arts) at Cheruthuruthi near Shoranur and Trichur of old Cochin State in North Malabar under the inspiration of one of the greatest Kathakaḷi actors of the first quarter of this century, Kunju/Pillai/Panikar who did not live to see the dream come true.

The Academy being sumptuously financed by the State, the Mahakavi could gather the few remaining masters of the tradition under its roof. The pupils were in the beginning the talented few, many of whom were picked up by the teachers from amongst the actors appearing in performances in temples. They were paid all their expenses. A scheme of scholarships was also instituted. The news of this new venture of undisputed integrity spread like a spark and was broadcast as the home of Vallathol's "new-found" drama. The revivalist activities encouraged lovers of Kathakaḷi to raise troupes of sufficient standard and to arrange exhibition of the plays in and outside India. The Maharaja of Travancore engaged a troupe of palace dancers. This troupe was disbanded on the merger of the State after Independence. Guru Gopinath, the disciple of Guru Kunchu Kurup and formerly the palace dancer of Travancore, was the first Malayali to perform outside Malabar. Others followed him.

In the harshness of Providence on him, Vallathol has found peace and has sprouted a fountain of inspiration and creativity. His growing deafness is no handicap to him. It has, in its stead, inspired new thoughts in Kathakaḷi and found in it remnants of the great tradition of this language for communication. His poetry flowered out in petals of drama. He turned his talent to write new plays and improve the old ones.

Guru Gopinath started a school of dancing at Poojapurai in Trivandrum—the Travancore School of Kéraḷa dancing (Chitrodaya Northakalayam) to impart training in Kathakaḷi. On the disbandment of the palace troupe, he started Natana-Niketana in Madras. Though he was brought up in the art in the old tradition, yet in his institution he has made a departure from conventions to fit in with the modern conditions of life. How far these departures have caught the imagination of the people is yet too early to say, but the credit for making Kathakaḷi performances presentable on the stage largely goes to him. This stands in contrast to Vellathol's troupe which still maintains the tradition in a large measure. Watching the developments in the presentation of this dance-drama during the last four decades, the inescapable conclusion is that the quality has deteriorated following the anxiety on the part of the actors to present an appreciative show.

Outside the cultural frontiers of Kéraḷa, this dance-drama has the limitations of cultural and social differences; and across the country it is limited in its appeal by the technique which creates each passage of a play complete in itself. If it is understood that Kathakaḷi is more than a dance of a drama, imbibing to a good measure the other facet of the omnibus term *Natya* (which includes drama, a emotive dance and pure dance), its responsibility to remain within the confines of the canons of drama and dance becomes too obvious—and, rather, impossible. Its position is precarious, presenting a number of complex problems to be solved. Efforts to revive it met with the challenge of the movies, commercialization of art and the varying tastes of the paying public. The stage-minded audience objected to the introduction of a number of *tiranokkus*, which might be justified in an open-air performance, and the beating of the drums. The use of hand-poses to relate words, phrases and sentences of a story have as much been found unacceptable by the uninitiative. Outside Kéraḷa, therefore, what has been shown has not only, infrequently, been sufficiently false as a dramatic art but also as a ballet, in spite of critics eulogizing it. The long duration of its plays has also come under fire, for whatever the overall effect might be, people do not have time to wait for long to witness a Kathakaḷi play conclude. The latter difficulty has another aspect,. which stands between the outside audience and the performance : inside Malabar, the rigours of training are also not finding favour with a majority of the performers. In brief, outside Kéraḷa not many chances are given to understand the great cultural heritage of this art.

When Uday Shankar found a treasure of dramatic art in Kathakaḷi to pattern his ballets on its techniques, he cut down the enormous repertoire of *mudras*, the heavy make-up, the violent drumming and elaborate costume. He modified the make-up, brought in a special pattern of costumes, re-arranged music and gave a unique get-up to his performances by imparting techniques other than Kathakaḷi and conforming the recitals to the needs of showmanship.

Apart from these difficulties, the financial position of students has also created a critical situation. Largely these are boys in straightened circumstances but belonging to dignified high caste who generally go in for Kathakaḷi, Malabari women do not take to it partly because of the social system of matriarchal prevalent amongst the Malabaris. Kérala Kalamandalam offers free board and lodging and imparts free training for a number of years, yet the student has a bleak future. If he is an extraordinarily brilliant student, he might be absorbed in the school; if not he finds it difficult to make his both ends meet. Some students are employed on minor jobs at various professional cultural centres, such as cinema studios, where not too many dancing parts require Kathakaḷi technique; many others are employed in other odd jobs; but whenever a performance is to take place, they are called from their villages to take part and return to their occupations on the conclusion of the show. As the number of Kathakaḷi dancers has increased since the revival, such calls have been reduced gradually. This is the tragedy with which this great art faces inside the country.

Outside, Kathakaḷi lengthens itself more than any other art in the form of "ballet", in which a dancer acts words of a song, punctuating them with *kalasams* (interludes) of pure dancing. Many of the sequences in these being complete in themselves, they are small entities of dance not thoroughly related with the entire sequence. If an actor is a hunter, he enacts not only his own role but also that of the animals he is hunting. In this way, his recital has a chain of complete solos, which, though seriously presented, are rarely blended into one whole personality. Because of this, Kathakaḷi performances do not yield themselves into the Western pattern of a ballet. In a love theme, while one character is active the other remains passive, there being no interlocking of the emotional reactions as they develop between lovers. In this characteristic, Kathakaḷi remains purely word-tone drama. If experiments are made to remove the single song accompaniment and operative dialogues are introduced, the genius of Kathakaḷi can lend itself into a ballet. And the effort that has been made to revive it shall bear fruit.

A ballet should be a living entity, not merely a portrayal of life. By living entity is implied a living painting of the drama, character, costumes of a people—all presented in such a moving and effective manner that it can speak through the soul of man. The rules of the drama have full application in a ballet—it should have *purvarang* (introductory invocation), a beginning to the story, a developemt of the theme, the climax and the end with a certain moral philosophy or objective. Dancing in ballet amounts to expressing the theme what would have otherwise been told in dialogues. In a ballet, therefore, masks would have no place.

Judged from this standard, ballet in Kathakaḷi will not strictly follow the academician's ballet for reasons peculiar to its region, to the language and to the living condition of the people of Kéraḷa and their mode of entertainment. *Tiranokku* which is an interlude to the appearance of a character on the stage and which may be repeated as many times as anti-heroes appear, will create a very local dramatic practice and injure the concept of the ballet. Besides, Kathakaḷi is exclusively a male art, whereas in ballet there can be women too.

Ballet in Europe, till the early part of the 17th century, was exclusively a male art. This however is no reason why Kathakaḷi should not develop itself into a ballet in future. The distinctive quality of this dance-drama is to be preserved. It has the peculiarity of the costume that makes it widely different from the ballet in which the form and the lines of the body tell a story; in Kathakaḷi these are hand-poses that, like a typewriter, indicate different letters and words, and complete sentences and a story. Moreover, Kathakaḷi is epical. It does not require those elaborate *mis-en-scene* which form an essential part of the ballet. Extraneous aid, physical lines, lack of facial mime, lack of representative costumes are but a few characteristics of the ballet that make it different from a Kathakaḷi performance.

Kathakaḷi has developed as a theatrical art, with discernible impacts of the classical Sanskrit stage, the Greek stage, the Portuguese culture and the indigenous folk-drama traditions. From the Sanskrit stage, it has drawn the techniques of *abhinaya* as described in the *Bharat Natya Sastra.*

From the Greek stage, it has drawn many a facet. The former has a sacrificial place and altar, Kathakaḷi has the flickering light or a big brass lamp; Greek tragedies and Kathakaḷi dance-dramas build themselves up on rhythmic sequences; both the schools have peculiar ways of walking—the former by means of the cothurnus, the latter by the outer edge of the feet. Kathakaḷi's characters appear with heavy make-up, which are reflective of flexible masks which the Greeks used. Liturgical and mystery plays of the Greeks are religious, so are such plays in Kathakaḷi. From the Portuguese, the manner of suspension of the long-flowing skirt seems to have been taken.

A product of a rare synthesis of foreign and national theatrical arts, Kathakaḷi has built up itself during the last 300 years into a complete expression of dance, drama and music. It reminds us of the manner in which the three arts developed themselves in the past on the stage merging them into a new concept of art, namely, the dance-drama. It has got a future that no other style of dancing in India has in the field of dramatic art. It successively brings a story to a climax that makes it a living entity. The end brings in it an awakening in the audience from its slumber. As an art, therefore, it has a future that will enable it to bring itself closer to the people. That it is no longer a localised art has been well-proved by the many performances and the receptions it has received throughout the country and outside. The spheres in which Kathakaḷi is to modify itself are those which will relate to its traditional costume, make-up and music. In the dramatic *persona,* introduction of female dancers will enhance the effect of *lasya* dancing among the female role-types. Music for Kathakaḷi is not easily comprehensible—the beating of the drums which might be suitable for an open-air performance do not conform to the needs of a modern stage. Apart from percussion instrument accompaniments, the music for Kathakaḷi has to be a well-set music consistent with the story of the dance-drama. Musical recitation of the poems or dialogues need to be cut down to the minimum and to be translated into Hindi which can be easily understood by the audience. As for the costume and make-up, the grandeur of this art largely lies in them and their forms have to be preserved with such modifications which the modern conditions expect. The curiosity which these forms developed until a few years back is fast losing, and, therefore, they call for such adaptations in presentation which may conform to the new values of aesthetics. The gait and the movement of Kathakaḷi actions are singularly its own and require to be toned down to conform to the needs of the modern stage.

Kathakaḷi, as a historic, histrionic art, has from time to time adapted itself to the changing conditions. The foreign influences it has exerted vividly portrays its essential characteristic of elasticity. It is an art; which has undergone such modifications which the changing environments have obligated, and is, therefore, the people's art—imbibing the civilization and cultural behaviour of a nation.

MAHAKAVI VALLATHOL

Credit goes to Mahakavi Vallathol, the greatest poet of Malabar, who has breathed life into the dying Kéraḷa art of dance-drama. Through his efforts Kathakaḷi is coming to its own magnificence. The glorious renaissance brought about by him has flared a radiant path for this marvellous art of word-tone drama. More and more enthusiastic Western admirers are flocking to Vallathol's *Kéraḷa Kala Mandalam.* This Academy has a band of supreme artistes to impart training on the principles of dynamic dance movements.

Poet Vallathol's troupe of Kéraḷa dancers has succeeded in presenting this most artistical and magnificent dance-art of Kathakaḷi to the popular appreciation of the modern man by modernising the system of presentation, by modifying the costume and the make-up of actors, by shortening the duration of plays, by "fully exploiting the artistic and aesthetic phases of art", and by still further harmonising the rhythmic flow of music with dance and acting; but conserving, at the same time, the great antiquity of movement, the inherent, and ancient grandeur and individuality of the art.

The modernisation of Kathakaḷi, or its adaptation to the changes in the outlook of the people—especially of Kéraḷa—has secured for it great recognition from art connoisseurs, who, having found in it a treasure house of histrionic art, have made a statement, needing no qualification, that the art of Kathakaḷi will never die so long as ancient Hindu traditions, culture and civilization, and creative art survive in earth.

GURU GOPINATH

The contribution of Guru Gopinath is of no less significance. If Vallathol's *Kéraḷa Kala Mandalam* is an institution devoted to the rejuvenation of the art of Kéraḷa in all its varied forms, Gopinath is in himself an institution of all that is embodied in every art of Kathakaḷi. Having attained a high degree of proficiency in the art after undergoing a rigorous training for over 12 years under great masters, particularly his cousins, Paramu Pillai and Mathoor Kunju Pillai Panicker—the two greatest Kathakaḷi actors of their times—, Gopinath "polished" his art in *Kéraḷa Kala Mandalam.* His exit from the Academy with the famous American danseuse, Ragini Devi, marked the beginning of his career as the Kathakaḷi dancer. But it was difficult to find an audience for a Kathakaḷi performance. Even amongst the educated classes in its own homeland, Kathakaḷi had little appreciation.

Gopinath took a bold step. His first appearance on the Bombay stage was punctuated with a departure from the traditional style of presentation. The dance-drama was presented in a new garb, the rhythmic beauty and purity and the technique were preserved unmolested though crudities of conventions so often proved revolting to the popular taste, were abandoned with no trace left behind. In this experiment, he brought about a reform which is responsible for the popularisation of Kathakaḷi. He modified even the traditional costumes and background music. He confined himself to interpretative episodic dances based on Kathakaḷi technique, without attempting to give running stories in full. It created a mass appeal : Gopinath became a successful dancer.

Paying an eloquent tribute to Gopinath, the Ereal (Kathakaḷi) "artiste", Dr. Rabindranath Tagore wrote :

> "There are not many who could rightly take their stand by his (Gopinath's) side either in India or abroad. He brought to my mind glimpses of a great past when dancing was one of the most treasured arts in India and not as today, a mere device for whetting up the jaded appetite of the idle rich, and now that dancing is again coming into vogue amongst us, his style should give us a correct lead, for in want of it we are yet groping in the dark."

After becoming the palace dancer of Travancore, Gopinath started the famous School of Kéraḷa Dancing, the *Sri Chitrodaya Narthakalayam*, the first of its kind in India, in Pujpurai in Trivandrum. For eight years the institute earned an enviable reputation. Gopinath relinquished the charge of management and migrated to Madras in 1945 where he started the famous school of Kathakaḷi dancing, the *Natana Niketan* in Mylapore. In the *Nikatan*, as in the *Narthakalayam*, a troupe of performers is maintained which is the best in all-India. Gopinath is here carrying on the task of potent renaissance of Indian dance-art.

UDAY SHANKAR

Towards the renaissance of Kathakali, the unique contribution of Sri Uday Shankar has to be rightly appreciated. Without prejudice to sentimentality, Uday can be acclaimed as the greatest moderniser of Kathakaḷi. His success can be attributed to his being a non-Malayali; he is a Bengali Indian. Many conventional crudities owe their allegiance to nativity. Uday found it rather difficult to adapt himself to these. He was convinced that for a proper appreciation of the art of Kathakali, a planned departure from conventions in costumes, head-dresses and cumbersome make-ups was necessary. He carried out a systematic renovation of the art, keeping the purity and essential characteristic in their original magnificence. The task was carried to a successful conclusion under the able guardianship of one of the best exponents and teachers of Kathakaḷi.

Uday started his life as an ameteur "hotch-potch" dancer, but soon acquired mastery in Kathakaḷi at the feet of Namboodri. In fact, a large share of his success was due to the great Guru, who passed away on August 7, 1943, at the ripe age of 63. The Guru saw art in life and life in art, and being an extremely religious and pious man, he saw his God in Art and in his artistic work the fittest medium for reaching the Divine. He was the first Brahmin to take to Kathakaḷi. For about 15 years he studied *abhinaya* under a famous *Cakkiyyar* teacher. At the end of the studies, he toured all over Malabar with the best of Kathakaḷi troupes and earned an enviable recognition from kings and nobles. He was an art incarnate. With a straight body, sturdy as his spirit, the Guru was tirelessly patient in demonstrating Kathakaḷi movements. His breath-taking skill of expression of emotions and ideas by the use of hand poses and facial mime dotted by delicate expressions and nuances served him in whole and not merely in stage performance.

Of such a Guru, Uday is the pupil. No doubt, therefore, that he was eulogized by the Westerners as the "Cultural Ambassador of India". The supple movements of his *angas*, the ripple of his facial nuances, the rhythm of his foot-steps, the subtle but simple make-up and new pattern of costumes and the powerful and supremely melodious music combine to produce that sublime effect on the audience which Uday holds in all grandeur and conviction. Paying a tribute to Uday's Indian art, the American press once observed : "If this is India, American is hovering in wilderness." True enough the tribute is to the art of Kathakaḷi, as renovated and adapted by Uday.

The renaissance of Kathakaḷi cannot be said to have reached its final phase. Still much has to be completed—though not so much by a bold departure from conventions. Kathakaḷi as a histrionic art can be harnessed into the channels of ballet-dancing of the West. Recent attempts at introducing ballet-like compositions have not met with desired success. Uday's attempts though attractive lack vitality. India needs a central institution where all Kathakaḷi may be pooled to concentrate on one object, namely, how best to make Kathakaḷi a world-art.

CHAPTER XX

THE SUMMING : EVOLUTION OF KÉRAḶA'S DANCE-FORM

by

KRISHNA CHAITANYA

Kathakaḷi today has become an internationally known dance-drama form. But it is doubtful if people outside Kéraḷa have adequate appreciation of the various antecedent forms, their intrinsic aesthetic merit and their contribution to the evolution of *Kathakaḷi* itself.

Somewhat like the miracle plays of Europe, but in incipient form, ritual plays had been enacted in temple precincts from very early times. A poem on the slaying of the demon Darika by Durga had an irresistible momentum which made the recital develop into an incipient drama. And however great may seem the gap between germinal beginning and the form perfected by a long evolution, in the Dionysian frenzy of the climatic action of a *Kathakaḷi* play, which frequently was the killing of a demoniac character, we are once again swept back from the merely poetic faith of the modern mind, which stems from a willed suspension of disbelief, to a sensitiveness that reacts powerfully to strange intimations, to the dark pulse of the blood, to the upsurge of buried emotions. The extraordinary vigour of *Kathakaḷi* is a legacy from this distant origin. But the transformation of this raw, almost primitive vigour into a classical strength was the fruit of the long evolution since the commencement in ritual.

The gymnasia (*kalari*) for military training, which also came into existence in very early times, used to have periodic celebrations with special displays of skill in weapons and the techniques of combat. With the infiltration and stabilisation of the Aryan stratum in the land, Brahmins also entered these gymnasia as trainees and later as teachers and the celebrations took a religious turn. This was the origin of the *Sankha Kaḷi* (also called *Sastrakali*, *Chathirakali* or *Satrakali*). Though the festivities closed with the display of combatant techniques they began with ritual worship, recital or narrative poems on the deity worshipped, and included comic interludes. Comic characters like the Fool, the Drunkard, the Fisherman, etc. now emerge on the scene. Some of the episodes seem clearly to be humorous retrospects of the difficulties, since resolved, which the Brahmins had to face in their early conflicts with the military aristocracy of the land. For instance, one comic character, called *Kandappan*, enters the scene shouting that in the land of the Kaimal (the Nair Chieftain) no one shall make merriment without the Kaimal's permission and he effectively silences the singers by ramming handfuls of leaves into their mouths. The performances began with a procession to the gymnasium and some believe that this recalls the visit of a group of Hindu theologians and philosophers to the court of the Perumal (the emperor) for a duel of words with Buddhist metaphysicians. The association with the gymnasium contributed a couple of legacies to the subsequent evolution. The dramatic tradition would later divide into two parallel traditions, one evolving into comedy, the other into dance-drama. Both traditions gave high place to the ballet element and required prolonged discipline and training of the physique. Here the early tradition of the gymnasia proved helpful. The second legacy was inherited only by the stream of comedy. It was the closeness to contemporary social reality, the capacity for shrewd, humorous commentary through the creation of popular character types.

In *Chilappathikaram*, a second century (A. D.) classic attributed to the brother of the Kéraḷa emperor, we get clear references to many types of dances and dramatic spectacles, with special mention of the art of the Cakkyars. The Cakkyar recited stories from the epics during temple festivals and enlivened his narration with the *Tandava* dance rhythms associated with Siva and also gestures (*mudras*) and bodily postures (*karanas*) which are clearly derived from Bharata.

The Cakkyar tradition laid the mimetic base for the further evolution. A fuller form emerged from this—the *Kootiyattam*—where many Cakkyars participated and the result was a fairly complete dramatic representation, again based on the theories of Bharata. A divergent line from the earlier mono-acting was the *Pathakam* recital. Here the dance element was given up and the narrative unfolded mainly through alternating prose and song sequences the gestures of course being retained. While, earlier, the Cakkyars relied almost solely on Sanskrit compositions, for the more relaxed and popular *Pathakam* recital, a new literary category emerged. This was the *Champu*, a narrative in verse and musical prose with a language texture which accommodated more and more of Malayalam idiom and vocabulary.

The Cakkyar's art was dominated essentially by the comic spirit. Though the point of departure was legend and epic, the Cakkyar brought to the earth the denizens of Valhalla. The way he narrated the stories, the gods and demons fought it out on the fields of Kéraḷa and the infinite escapades of Krisna took place on the familiar woods and river banks of the native land of his audience. A remarkable feature in the Kootiyattam was the introduction of a clown (*Vidusaka*) who caricatured the moods of the hero. When Arjuna in *Subhadra Dhananjayam* goes into raptures over Subhadra, the clown gives a thoroughly unflattering description of his mistress. A unique flavour results from this amalgam, where lyrical ecstasy is given its place but the sober, even sharp, commentary of sturdy commonsense is in constant accompaniment. In the mono-acting sequences, the Cakkyar arbitrarily conscripted his contemporaries into the stream of the narrative. As happened in the case of Greek comedy, the holiday mood of the occasion gave the Cakkyar considerable immunity and he could make fun of his contemporaries as much as he liked and get away with it.

From the mono-acting of the Cakkyar tradition, with an enormous strengthening of its leanings towards social commentary arose the Thullal. In point of time, it made its appearance later than Kathakaḷi, but since it diverged away from the fuller dramatic form, we shall deal with it first. In the *Thullal*, the actor sang, danced and mimed the narrative, dressed in a picturesque costume. Unlike the Cakkyar, who used both prose and verse in his recital, the Thullal dancer confined himself to verse, the narrative efficiency of which became rapidly mature. In describing a township it could be as precise and crowded with detail as Balzac's prose. In bringing out the grandeur of a forest, it could be as effective in its visual cues as the verse of Heredia or Leconte de Lisle. In describing a physiognomy it could be as subtle as La Bruyere's style. Its capacity ranged from the staccato forceful use of alliteration and rhymes one is familiar with in Dryden, to slow-moving verses which have as much languor as the most meditative lines of Keats.

The literary quality which stands out most prominently in the Thullal is humour. Kunchan Nambiar, who wrote over sixty of these, is one of the world's greatest humorists. A caricaturist in verse, he has a keen eye for people's profiles, the face of the old vagabond, wizened, toothless, chin and nose ready to meet, or the overhanging abdomen of the gourmand. Nambiar's humour knows no inhibitions. The irate husband smashing the crockery, thrashing the wife and dancing about on one leg because supper is not ready. The arm-chair hero running like a hare in the thick of the fight, these are some of the types we meet in his boisterous verse. And just to bring out the extreme freedom with which legendary themes were handled, it may be mentioned that the frenzy of the hungry husband, supposed to be a Nair too, has been introduced as one of the sights seen by the swan in its leisurely flight to Damayanti with a tender message from Nala.

Uproarious like Rabelais, this poet who lived and wrote two centuries ago was as keen a social critic. The priestly class whose place in the social hierarchy gave them a birth-right to the magnificent literature of the Vedas and who started blackmarketing on their monopoly, the decadent aristocracy who produced well-coiffured, effeminate fops who forgot the use of their weapons, pawned them, frequented taverns and ogled at the maidens, the alien trading class charged eighteen pieces of money for things costing eight, the government officials who doublecrossed both their masters and the people—these types frequently come up for very rough handling.

In *Thullal* the roles of the raconteur and actor are perpetually interchanged in the same man with the aesthetic effects which characterize the continuity of well-edited films. In one moment the actor is the narrator and his gesture makes us listen inwardly to the unheard hum and busy life in Gokul, the pastoral village where Krisna spent his childhood. In the next second we have drawn rapidly near and the actor is before us in the guise of a cowherd boy or a milkmaid churning the curd. Again, in one moment the actor is bringing out the comic antics of a vain fop, with a complete self-identification, and in the next he melts back into the role of the raconteur and indulges in an inimitable gesture which means "There you are ! That's the sort of clown who sets himself up as a rival to Krisna for the hand of Rukmini." The narrative thus emerges with a continuously shifting focus, the camera now quite close, penetrating into the interior world of men's moods, day-dreams and ambitions, now remote, seeing things in a broader perspective, correcting vanity with raillery and deeper fixations with a cathartic distortion.

Let us now return to the main line of evolution which had its climax in the emergence of *Kathakaḷi.* We have seen that the *Kootiyattam* itself had reached the form of a fairly full-fledged dance-drama. The next phase was the accession of immense popularity in Kéraḷa by *Gita Govinda* written by Jayadeva in Bengal towards the close of the eleventh century. *Ashtapadiyattam* was the dramatic representation of this exquisite lyrical play by the Cakkyars. A refinement of it, evolved by Manavedan, the Zamorin, was the *Krisnattam.* The whole story of Krisna was cast into a drama-cycle which would need eight nights for serial production. Vilvamangala or Lilasuka, the Krisna devotee, who was a friend of Manavedan, helped in designing the costume of the actor who represented Krisna. Whereas the Cakkyar-actor used to recite his lines, Manavedan felt that in a dance-drama form the actors should confine themselves to the ballet element and mimetic expression. The narrative song thus came to be relegated to attendant singers. Probably the reason which Lucian found valid for the dissociation of song and dance in Greece ("The violent exercise caused shortness of breath, and the song suffered from it") might have influenced the similar development in Kéraḷa also. The pleasant rivalry between northern and southern Kéraḷa was probably the reason for the creation of a very similar form, the *Ramanattam*, by the Raja of Kottarakkara in the south. This was a drama-cycle on the life of Rama for serial representation through eight successive nights.

The evolution now gained in tempo due to the contribution of a succession of gifted people. In *Krisnattam* and *Ramanattam*, the great majority of the characters had worn masks. Vettath Raja began the movement of differential make-ups and costumes which was further stabilised by two Nambudiris, Kalladikott and Kaplingad. Finally, when, in the sixteenth century, the Raja of Kottayam wrote his libretti, the level of production had attained generally to that of the *Kathakaḷi* as we are familiar with the form today.

The *Thullal* was essentially the art of the reconteur. He could mix up past and present, transport his audience back to the scenes of old legends, bring legendary figures to contemporary times and scenes, indulge in thinly veiled satire at the expense of his audience, change roles frequently as narrator and actor. But this shifting focus was abandoned for the sake of dramatic integrity in Kathakaḷi. The themes were always the old, familiar, legendary stories. So are the themes of Aeschylus and Sophocles and even of Anouilh in his *Antigone*. To evolve a poignant drama out of stories already familiar to readers seems to be a capacity which the modern writer seems to have lost.

Scenic backgrounds were never introduced—an important point of difference from the European opera. But as Yeats has said, "the poet cannot evoke a picture to the mind's eye if a second-rate painter has set his imagination of it before the bodily eye." In *Kathakaḷi*, as in Elizabethan drama, the verse solved the problem at a higher level by developing a heightened colour and descriptive sensitiveness. There were no stage props. A great bronze lamp with many wicks illuminated the stage. Just before the appearance of the actor, the stage attendants held up a curtain-like cloth, screening the character from the view of the audience. It is important to note that both these elements were assimilated into the dramatic form in a unique manner. Thus, a demôniac character would seize the curtain forcibly and fling it away while ultimately revealing himself. The "rise of the curtain" thus became expressive of character. Likewise, some of the demoniac characters would on occasions move towards the great bronze lamp and whip up its flames by violent gestures.

The costume consists of billowing, kilt-like skirts, breast-plates, crowns, anklets, bangles and wristlets. The ballet element is attuned to the mood of the narrative, fast in tempo in battle scenes, relaxing into languorous slow sequences in the romantic passages. Procedural practice allows free rhapsodical ballet measures without the support of the text whenever the actor thinks fit.

Kathakaḷi has evolved an almost complete language of gesture. There is a basic alphabet of twenty-four gestures. Several of these stand for many different things and the specific meanings are determined by the context. Serial combinations of gestures can evolve extended representational significance. The hand gestures are supported by various related and expressive bodily movements. Of paramount importance are the movements of the eye.

The immaculate perfection of the eyes, eyebrows and gestures of the hands in painting as well as in sculpture are the real insignia of Indian art and all art that has felt its influence. A glance directed earthward, lowered eyelids and a simple line of brows eloquently convey a mood of infinite reverie in the Padmapani of Ajanta and the Amitabha of Horiyuji in distant Japan. The reassuring *Abhaya mudra* (gesture of liberation from fear) is typical not only of the Nataraja but of the Kwanyins of Chinese Buddhism. In dancing these gestures gain the further grace of mobility. In passages of psychological tension, the speed with which moods change their essence can be compared with only one parallel in literature : the dramas of Racine. And such passages always call for supreme efforts.

It is here that the significance of *Kathakaḷi* make-up is revealed. As mentioned earlier, masks were used originally. As the experience of Greek drama and Chinese and Japanese plays shows, masks need not be a crude device. For they can be clear, immediate signals of types and retain a certain universal quality. The *Kathakaḷi* make-up retains this advantage, because the whole face is painted over, the lips, eyebrows and eyelashes emphasized. The differential make-up is, by now, luminously clear in its typological indications. To this extent, the make-up of functions like the mask of a Japanese "No" play actor. But the mask does not permit the face its rich expressive mobility. In the case of the *Kathakaḷi* character, however, with the contour of the face clearly demarcated by a white thin fringe, which frames it effectively, the face becomes a stage for the inner spirit. The tumult or the tranquillity within find immediate expression in the mobile feature with no mask to conceal them.

Music, entrusted to singers, while the actors were left free to concentrate on the ballet and histrionic elements, developed rapidly. Percussion instruments and cymbals were also introduced as the nucleus of an orchestra. With this innovation, the verse, which through its metrical variety had already learnt to dance, began to sing. Many of these songs are of entrancing beauty. Here is a description of a heroine : "God, when he created you, emptied out his treasure-chest of beauty. Scraping together what was left he created the moon, whose radiant face has blemishes which your face knows not. Then he washed his hands in the lake and from the traces of the primordium of beauty that mingled with the waters, lotuses have sprung." There is another example which will bring out the expression of mood through the synthesis of imagery and melody. Towards the close of a summer day, Ravana, strolling alone in the woods, comes across the nymph, Rambha. Her beauty sinks into his heart. "Like a flake of gold on the river-bed seen through the shimmering waters of the blue Kalindi", runs the song, "the beauty of her golden form gleams through her fluttering blue garments." The *Raga* is *Nilambari*, a mode of haunting sweetness which evokes a sensuous reverie. In almost all the finer songs the melodic mode has been selected with a similar insight into its evocative quality. The variety and richness of the musical texture can be understood from the fact that the *Triumph of Ravana*, the opera in which the aria just cited occurs, uses seventeen *Ragas* or melodic modes, though it is one of the shortest in the repertoire.

Since *Kathakaḷi* has often been loosely described as an opera form, it is worth while studying the affinities and contrasts between it and the European opera. In Europe, the Florentine group who made the first experiments, Gluck and Algarotti who took up the threads in the eighteenth century and Wagner who perfected the form in the nineteenth, all envisaged the opera as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a joint work of art produced by the union of poetry, drama, music and all the subsidiary arts of the theatre. But it seems undeniable that the histrionic element has been relegated more and more to the background in the evolution of the European opera. The main reason for this seems to have been the unwillingness to dissociate the roles of singing and acting. In this connection it is interesting to recall the transient phase in the history of the European opera when the dissociation was in fact tried out, though it was subsequently abandoned. When drama and vocal music had both reached a high level of development, an attempt was made in Italy towards the end of the sixteenth century to combine both, with the help of singers behind the actors joining their voices to those of the actors. But this practice was abandoned when Peri and other experimenters in Florence studied ancient Greek drama and substituted the recitative or speech-like intonation of the individual actor for the woven vocal lines of the madrigal style, which would be too difficult for anybody who was not a trained singer. In Peri's *Eurydice*, performed in 1600, the Renaissance thus showed its first effect in music, a century and a half later than it did in literature. The recitative has always been helpful in securing dramatic expression, since it imposes no undue strain on the actor to the detriment of the histrionic role; but it could not prevent the return of the freer melody, as the Hellenising Florentines imagined. When the aria returned and proliferated into numerous varieties like the aria *cantabile, aria di bravura, aria parlante*, the opera came to prefer singers to actors. The result was that at the crisis of every ripening dramatic situation, we find either the Prima Donna singing a long soliloquy or all the characters gathering near the footlights for an interminable joint performance. In *Kathakaḷi* no demands for high musical talents were made from the actors who could therefore perfect their histrionic powers.

The European opera incorporates dances but the dance rhythm is not a continuous matrix in which the drama unfolds. In this respect *Kathakaḷi* is more like the European ballet. But the ballet, on the other hand, has not got Kathakaḷi's mature language of gestures though it uses the equivalents of the *karanams* or expressive postures and movements involving the whole body. Further, the ballet relies on instrumental music and therefore lacks the full-bodied libretto of *Kathakaḷi* which can be read and enjoyed like a Shakespeare play.

Romanticism always lays too great a stress on inspiration and spontaneity by themselves. Classicism goes further in emphasizing the responsibility for realising communicable, outward form for what is incomplete in art if it remains merely inwardly felt. T.S. Eliot's doctrine of the "objective correlate" brings out this newly developed insight. "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlate'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula for that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." It is remarkable how brilliantly this approach was anticipated by Bharata in his theory of the evocation of the *Rasa* or aesthetic emotion. Throughout its long and devious evolution, *Kathakaḷi* has conserved this insight. The expressive mobility of eye and visage, the hand's gesture and the foot's rhythm and the posture of the body seems so spontaneous. But the *Kathakaḷi* actor acquires it only after a long and painful training in the art of mobilising objective correlates for aesthetic expression. And the facts that no hardness, monotony or automatism lingers and nascent emotion is perfectly mirrored and is swift in its contagion are a tribute to the classic maturity of an art that can conceal art.

APPENDIX I

KATHAKALI PURANA (LEGENDS)

In Kéraḷa, a number of legends associated with the life of eminent masters of Kathakaḷi are famous. Though no veracity for their correctness is assumed by the author, they are interesting enough to be mentioned here, for the elation of prospective students of Kathakaḷi. The source for these legends is largely Shri K. Bharatha Iyer. About the legend of the birth of Kéraḷa, the story of Parasurama is already mentioned.

On Acting

In the temple at Tiru-vilva-mala (in Travancore-Cochin State), where the presiding deity is Rama, episodes from the Ramayana are the favourite plays enacted. Once when Khara-vadha (slaying of the demon Khara by Rama) was enacted, Khara burst on the scene with a highly provocative challenge to Rama. He mocked, sneered and proudly boasted of his great prowess. In mounting rage he raised war cries that sounded like monsoon thunder, creating a tense, electric atmosphere of blood and fury. The dreaded and vicious demon appeared, ready to destroy everything before him; the audience cowered, weighed down by the sense of an impending doom and the *asura* (demon) towered over all, Fury incarnate. "You worm, come to battle with me !" sneered the demon. He was no longer an actor simulating a role; he had become Khara himself. Suddenly, the doors of the inner shrine flew open and a column of bright flame blinded everyone for the space of a split second. When the audience recovered from their consternation Khara was missing ! The enactment of this particular play was discontinued in the temple from that tragic day.

A similar incident is associated with the temple at Tiruvalla in Travancore-Cochin State.

The point in dispute between two fastidious "Kathakaḷi-mad brothers" was, as to how many times Kicaka should emit the cry "Gwa-Gwa" in a particular context in the drama of Kicaka-vadha. (The wild, wicked and demoniac types of characters in Kathakaḷi emit certain sounds which vary in volume, pitch and significance; they are indicative of moods.) The brothers were unable to agree among themselves and this ultimately led to a family dispute in which the other members took sides and caused much public discussion and sensation at the time.

On Make-Up

Narayana Bhattatthiri, reputed Sanskrit poet and philosopher of Kéraḷa and a devotee of Krisna, was once asked by a friend why he had ceased attending Kathakaḷi shows, of which he had been a great enthusiast. He replied that his love for the art had not abated a bit but he had to forgo the pleasure of witnessing them for a special reason. After seeing a show, he said, he found it difficult to forget the form of the Lord in the Kathakaḷi guise; whenever he sat in contemplation the figure of the Lord appeared to him in the typical Kathakaḷi make-up. It was difficult to envisage Him in any other form, or in His formless aspect, while this picture persisted.

Kaplingat Nambutiri, the author of many Kathakaḷi stage practices, is said to have been much exercised over the problem of making-up the actors in the form of mythological characters. At last, one night he escaped into the solitude of the seashore where he prayed to his Istandevata for light and sat in deep contemplation. Looking out into the sea he saw the forms of the gods, demons and other mythological personalities appearing over the waves from the waist upwards. The Kathakaḷi characters are modelled after this divine vision. They are the forms in which the gods and demons, etc. revealed themselves to human eyes.

On Gesture

A simple villager watching a Cakkyar artiste interpreting the passage "Ravana drank in the beauty of Sita with his eyes" (the whole interpretation was done by eye-movements only), was thrilled and exclaimed to his equally thrilled companion, "See, see, how he drinks water with his eyes !"

Placcery Nambutiri, a great patron of Kathakaḷi, was also a highly accomplished actor and reputed for his role of the Brahmin in the drama Rukmiṇi-Svayamvara. On one occasion two maid-servants had come to see this play : one went to sleep in a retired corner asking her companion to wake her up when the Nambutiri appeared in his famous role. At the time the maid was awakened, the Nambutiri was interpreting the passage "Grieve not oh elephant-gaited one" and portraying "elephant-gaited one". She looked, rubbed her eyes, looked again and exclaimed in undisguised merriment and much puzzled : "Why, why is it that the actor is walking like an elephant ?" The elephant and its gait were well understood, but she had failed to grasp the poetic conception whereby it represented the gait of a proud and beautiful woman.

On eye actions

A Cakkyar artiste was describing the occasion of Dhaupadi's wedding. This princess was to wed from the assembled kings the one who succeeded in shooting down by the neck, the fast revolving figure of a bird, that was fixed on top of a high post. This intriguing target eluded every marksman of repute, until at last, the greatest of all who ever wielded a bow, Arjuna, with one unerring shot brought it down to the ground by severing its head. The Cakkyar artiste was rendering this incident exclusively by eye-expressions. The fast revolving bird set on high, the well-aimed shot, the deadly hit and the movements of the collapsing bird, all these were told by the eyes. The exposition was masterly and superb; it thrilled everyone except the Nangyar, the lady musician, who was keeping time on the cymbals. The Cakkyar noticed her dissatisfaction. The puzzled artiste later enquired of her the reason for this. She said that his acting was unconvincing. She then demonstrated it correctly. She went through every stage of the incident and did as well as the Cakkyar. But, when the wounded bird fell (the Cakkyar had closed the death incident of the bird at this stage) she proceeded a little further. The bird fell and then rolled over two or three times, flapping and fluttering its feeble wings in agony and then lay dead and motionless.

The following incident, associated with the remarkable artistic career of Kunju Pillai, tells how closely Kathakaḷi artistes have kept pace with the Cakkyars in the matter of abhinaya by eyes. He was on one occasion playing the role of Ravana in "Ravana Vijayam" in which the demon king waylays the celestial maiden Rambha, pleads his love and when rejected, ravishes her by force. In this particular show the role of Rambha was taken by a woman actor. Ravana urged his love repeatedly and ardently, only to be rejected. In the very act of urging his desire, the actor became, as it were, a living flame of passion. In a final effort, his eyes, with all their artistry and seductiveness, were turned on Rambha. They became the sole armoury of his passion. The eyes beseeched and implored; she resisted. Again his eyes called and caressed her; they looked too enchanting and ravishing. Rambha still resisted. A third time the eyes pleaded with animating passion, setting in motion a current of irresistible temptation; those looks were destructively seductive and inflaming. In a split second Rambha flew into Ravana's arms and embraced him in burning passion. The woman in her succumbed to the call; everything else was forgotten—the stage, the audience and the drama. Before the gaping crowd could recover from its stupefaction, the woman actor regained her balance and like a stricken gazelle she disappeared through the sombre causeway of shadows into the darkness of the night, never again to return to the stage.

The degree of skill attained in eye-expressions was so high that one of the Kathakaḷi dramatists even went to the length of putting into the text of a play a situation where the hero had to reflect in one eye anger and in the other sorrow.

In the drama Ravana Vijayam there is a remarkable love scene in which Ravana makes love to his spouse Mandodari. The great master who loved his art and his gifted pupil decided to go the whole hog. This master had a youthful and charming daughter and she was asked to play the part of Mandodari. The young pupil was at that period of life when every youth is highly romantic, and more particularly so in this instance where both were in love with each other, unknown to the teacher. The pupil was asked to take the young lady on his lap and then interpret the song. What could be more intriguing and intensely alive? The youth afire with love and burning with passion at the physical proximity of his beloved and the young lady finding herself in such close intimacy with her lover; while the formidable teacher and father demanded all attention for the instruction and interpretation. Their limbs ached with passion, yet they had to hold themselves in restraint. The restraint accentuated the tension and made every movement and gesture surcharged and more eloquent. The whole became a living flame, flowing with love and by the very restraint imposed, the artiste attained a freedom from himself.

APPENDIX II

"IMPRESSIONS OF KATHAKALI PLAYS"

Some foreign writers have recorded their impressions of Kathakaḷi plays witnessed by them largely at the Kéraḷa Kala-Mandalam. Some of these impressions are forceful and are reproduced below.

PUTANA MOKSA

(THE SALVATION OF PUTANA)

Miss Alice Boner writes in the *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta, June,* 1935):

The wicked King Kamsa, having been foretold of his death at the hands of his nephew who was secreted at Gokul, commissions the ogress Putana to kill the child by poisoning him with her milk. She transforms herself into a beautiful damsel and enters the nursery at Gokul on the sly to accomplish her evil intention. The following is the impression of Miss Alice Boner on witnessing the play Putana Moksa.

"The boy who played Putana was an extremely gifted pupil of the Kala-Mandalam. In his female attire he incorporated, whether consciously or unconsciously, one of those experienced, cunning kind of women, always out for intrigue and mischief, dreaded and propitiated by all. A female who might be twisting a man's will for evil or good on to destruction, enchanting, bewitching and extremely clever. She enters the stage with innocently wondering eyes, as if searching the way to the village where Krisna lives. Approaching the village she complacently describes people who play and gossip, and mimes their dances and games of ball with an entrancing grace. On finding out Krisna's abode, she depicts ecstatically the beauties of the seven-storied mansions, the shining courtyards, the cool water running through flower groves, the enraptured peacocks dancing on mount Govardhana, the lovely cowherds and Nanda's house, from which arises the fragrance of curd drops and sweet butter. After having admired her fill, she swiftly slips into the house. To suggest this a small bench is introduced, on which lies a primitive wooden doll representing the child Krisna. Putana carefully looks round to see whether anybody has noticed her intrusion and being reassured slowly approaches the child. On horizontally spread knees she stealthily advances, gliding like a snake without lifting her feet from the ground. All her evil intentions are expressed in this gait. But she contrives the sweetest and most loving smile on her face and starts playing with the child. To amuse him she delicately snaps her fingers in his face and surreptitiously caresses him. Then turning back to Krisna with tender glances, she describes his dark blue colour, the envy of the clouds and how he is sitting on the leaf swimming on the water, raising his toe to his mouth. Enrapturing herself by his slight, strange scruples assail her heart (which is a woman's after all) and with compassion almost weeping she contemplates the infant she is sent to kill. Suddenly she shakes herself to proceed with her task. Seeing the baby weep, she affectionately asks him whether he is hungry and offers to feed him, describing voluptuously the roundness and plenty of her breasts. Cheering the child she takes him in her arms, quickly smears poison on her breast, and sets him to drink. Rocking the child on one arm and resting her head on the other hand, she looks absorbed and forlorn as women often do when they nurse. She takes the child from one breast to another, shakes him when the milk runs into his nose and smiles at him, till all of a sudden a flash of pain runs over her face. She looks alarmed, as if apprehending a menacing danger, but swallowing down her fear goes on feeding, rocking, smiling. But the pain increases. She rubs her bosom with a contracted face. No use, the pain becomes ever more violent, till she writhes scratching her neck, her breasts, her legs and tries to remove the child. As she does not succeed in this by force, she tries to persuade him by an engaging, and—how artificial—smile to take the other breast. Nor is this of any avail. She becomes mad with suffering, she pulls, pinches the child while pain distorts her face, she hammers wildly on his head, she tears her own feet, but the godly child is not to be shaken off the breast and slowly sucks the life out of her. She jumps to her feet in wild despair running up and down, alternately beating her head and chest and the child hanging from her breast. Her features in agony are disfigured to a horrible grimace, the grimace in which her real devilish nature is revealed. When finally she drops dying on the floor, no trace remains of the lovely woman she was before. She is a ghastly Raksasi killed by her own wicked deed."

PRAHLADA CARITA

(THE STORY OF PRAHLADA)

Mr. M. H. Brown, a foreign editor of the *Illustrated Weekly of India* writes in the Weekly of January 19, 1936, as follows:

The following is the record of the visual impressions gained by Mr. M. H. Brown (formerly editor of the *Illustrated Weekly of India*) on witnessing the story of the boy devotee of Visnu, Prahlada, and his father the demon king Hiranyakasipu.

"The King is so powerful that he has come to believe in his own divinity. But one thing annoys him. His son is a great devotee of Visnu. In fact, with an expression of devotion in his eyes, Prahlada continually counts on his fingers the names of the great god.

Hiranyakasipu becomes enraged...The demon king is angry. In stately fashion he takes counsel with his Dewan, a series of infuriated roars supplementing the real thread of the story told by hands, face and eyes.

Even to the unfamiliar with any dance technique it is clear that this King is angry. He positively exudes rage. Though on account of the chutti his face is almost immovable from the nose downward, his eyes tell of frenzy and his hands are gesturing threats, torture, death.

The music is reaching a transport of passion. And in spite of this storm Prahlada continues to worship Visnu.

The Dewan gives his advise in equally harsh terms; of course the son must worship his father.

Finally a guru is called in...The Great King exhorts him "Take my son; remove him from this foolish devotion for Visnu. Teach him to honour me."

The son departs, and the King rages on against Visnu; for Hiranyakasipu is an Asura and the sworn enemy of the Devas among whom Visnu is one of the greatest.

The son returns after his years of exile and instruction. His father welcomes him and then examines him. Again Prahlada's devotion to Visnu is apparent; again the father rages. Previously it would seem that he had reached the limit of anger but now the storm is really unleashed. At this point the scene on the stage seems to detach itself from the range of ordinary human emotions. It seems impossible that any human being could represent wrath so terrible.

The huge Kathakaḷi drum thunders out the frenzy. The singer reeling, keeps time with his gong. Hiranyakasipu seems to be swelling, growing even more terrible every second. Brandishing a sword he threatens his son. The latter remains inhumanly resigned to fate.

With flying fingers the King describes the tortures which await Prahlada : clubbing, trampling under an elephant, to be pitched from a mountain, mutilation with the sword. Still the boy is immovable.

Two hunters are called. They stand with veiled faces before the frenzied King to hear his commands. Prahlada shall die; die a hundred times. He who dares to worship Visnu shall suffer the extremes of the demon's ire.

Mere speech would be useless to express such horrible fury... So comprehensive is the Kathakaḷi technique that these people are able to represent anger, the basest of the passions, in a series of gestures, horrible, yet exquisite in their subtle expression.

Prahlada's trials begin—and so too the miracles. His hands are cut off—they grow again. He is unscathed by the elephant—uninjured by the mountain......

Like the comparatively calm centre of a cyclone comes the next episode.

"Where is your Visnu ?" enquires the King, wondering at the miracles.

"He is everywhere", replies Prahlada.

"What even in this rotten stump" Hiranyakasipu asks kicking the tree.

An ear-splitting crash of cymbals and out of the despised log rises Visnu, Visnu the destroyer in his Narasingha, man-lion incarnation.

No other theatre in the world can show such an appalling apparition. He has a lion's head beneath his crown. His face is covered with fur and bristles, his eyes are huge, his teeth-like knives, his arms are furried, his hands carry huge claws.

At last Deva and Asura have met.

Narasingha threatens the raging Hiranyakasipu with upraised talons. The din is terrific, both are roaring to the full capacity of their lungs. The singer's voice is strained to cracking point.

The hurricane of sound from drum and gong hits the listener with a violence that is physical.

A fight far above the human plane is going on on the stage. The struggle, bereft by the laws of drama of actual physical violence, is even more awe-inspiring on that account. The demon is being destroyed by the god's anger. Gradually he weakens and falls, just as it seems that the drum can grow no louder.

The climax has been reached. The God tears up the Asura; and in a victory dance which displays his marvellous power, Narasingha rips yards and yards of entrails from the body of the fallen king.

Human ears and eyes seem to be giving up the unequal struggle. One's mind is numbed by the impact of noise and drama... But the drama is reaching its end. The demon king lies in tatters and it is time for Prahlada to be rewarded with the blessing of Visnu. This is one of the points at which the actor's wonderful control over their expressions are displayed. Though he has been raving for half an hour, Narasingha changes from wrath to benevolence and Prahlada from resignation to adoration.

In a final ecstatic burst the story ends and the stream of epic poetry, expressed in some of the world's most beautiful gestures, comes to an end."

PANCALI'S PUSPA

(ASKING OF A FLOWER FROM BHIMA BY PANCALI)

Beryl De Zoete says in her book "The Other Mind":

The first dance was a scene from the drama of Bhima and Hanuman, in which Bhima's wife, Pancali, begs him to procure for her another flower like the sweetly perfumed one which a wind from Paradise has wafted to her feet. In case everyone does not know the story, Bhima was the second of the five Pandava brothers who in the epic of the Mahabharata are eternally jarring with their blood-relations, the rival clan of Kaurava; their strife ended only on the legendary battlefield of Kurukshetra, where almost all on both sides were slain. Even the gods who sided with one clan or another could not avert their fate, and Krishna himself perished at Kurukshetra. Pancali was officially the wife of all five brothers, but her tie with Bhima was specially close and is illustrated in several Kathakaḷi plays. Hanuman is the same magic monkey who, in the epic of the Ramayana, built the bridge from India to Ceylon. Pancali, played by the marvellous boy impersonator of female parts Putana Krishna, pictured the beauty of the flower in mudras with extraordinary tenderness and grace. Bhima, a small boy, with considerable dramatic power, re-enacted, also in mudras, the insult Pancali had suffered long ago at the hand of a brutal Kaurava, expatiated on her beauty and painted, by gesture alone, the mountain landscape where he would find the flower. Each verse of the song describing the action mimed by the dancers was followed by a free dance of an almost acrobatic character, called kalasam. The musicians were a hoarse but remarkable singers who also beat the drum with two long bent sticks, leaning forward and, as it were, inspiring the dancers' motions, and a boy who stood and sang passionately, beating the measure with cymbals. Another, sitting on the ground, beat both ends of the drum with his hands.

Hanuman is seated in meditation in the forest, his eyes rolled up, his right arm raised, his left hand pointing inwards to his navel. The approach of Bhima penetrates his yogic trance; three times he stirs from it but returns again to his absorption. At last he starts into full consciousness and begins to reconstruct the scene and to picture the possible intruder. (Everything was conveyed by mudras, and the drum beats, following the motions of his mind, were inexplicably impressive.) In an immensely animated dance, engaging every limb and muscle, Hanuman paints the forest and its inmates : a herd of elephants whose pride is humbled; startled lions who creep trembling to their dens; trees that fall thundering at the presence of the demonic invader. Then his mood changes; he invokes Rama and does a devotional dance; he divines a blood-relationship between himself and the intruder. (Hanuman and Bhima were both sons of the Wind God.) "What is my brother seeking ? A flower for his wife ? There are dangers in the path of which he must be warned." He decides to bar the path to danger. He assumes the form of an old monkey and totters to ground. He trembles, his hands shake with palsy, he changes shape before our eyes. This was an extraordinary experience; the outer being of Hanuman changed completely, without the aid of lighting, costume or make-up.

Bhima makes a tempestuous entry in a dance full of action, as he comes crashing through the forest. Suddenly he sees Hanuman and the slow revolutions of his body convey his revulsion of feeling. He orders him out of the way, amidst a tumult of drums and cymbals. "I am the son of the Wind God. I am wont to destroy all enemies by my single power. You fat, idle monkey, if you don't get out I will pound your body to atoms with my mace." Hanuman, with slow, feeble movements, replies: "I am very old and have sat here for years. No one ever comes this way; it is a dangerous way; but if you must go on, step over me." Bhima does a boastful, whirling dance and again orders him away. "I may not step over you, out of respect for great Hanuman; for his sake I am a friend of the whole race of monkeys."

No word was uttered by the dancers, who spoke only with their hands, the singers all the time chanting the text. The dancing is done on the outer edge of the foot, to a degree I had not believed possible though I had often heard of it. It is the basic position for certain springs done with knees wide apart and is said to avoid a shock in landing. The footwork is certainly amazing, though everything is so wonderfully coordinated that one must watch carefully to discover what is taking place in any particular part of the body, the face and hands being of such absorbing interest. The rhythmic counterpoint between feet, trunk, fingers and every separately controlled muscle of the face is bewilderingly beautiful and exciting.

Then Bhima mimes the greatness of Hanuman and his destruction by fire of Ravana's palace on Lanka. "Can there be anyone in the world who has not heard of Hanuman ?" But the old monkey remains rooted to the spot.

"I am infirm and suffering, and have no strength to rise. If you are resolved to go, leap over me." At last, thinking to finish off the sickly monkey, Bhima catches hold of the tail carelessly with his left hand (an imaginary tail, of course) and tugs and pulls but cannot move it. He screws up his eyes and rolls his eyeballs, his features are distorted and his body covered with sweat; but the tail grows in girth and becomes like a totem pole in length and resists all his efforts. Then at last he approaches the old monkey with humility and joins his hands in prayer. "Forgive my harsh words. Are you a celestial ? Are you the Lord of Ocean ? Are you the Monkey King ?" When Hanuman appears in his true form : "I am Hanuman, your brother," an exquisite change takes place in Bhima; he prostrates himself and desires to see the matchless form of Hanuman when he jumped across the ocean. But Hanuman smiles and says : "Neither you nor anyone can see that form. The state of things was different in that age; it does not exist now." Even Hanuman, who was from the beginning of time, must change his form to match the diminution of spiritual power in each successive age. "The ground, the rivers, the plants, the rocks, the celestials, the great rishis, all conform to time. Time is irresistible." Even in the fourth and most diminished age, which sounds exactly like the present but was also the age of the Mahabharata, Hanuman preaches adaptation to an inescapable decadence. But he does not say that Kali Yuga is the final stage. Bhima, however, will not go till he has seen the former shape of Hanuman, and at last Hanuman consents to modify its unbearable splendour. He mounts a stool, prays and assumes a majesty which, even though modified, deprives Bhima of his senses; he falls fainting to the ground. Hanuman embraces his brother and slowly draws him out of his trancelike prostration. The superbly transcendental sermon by Hanuman in the course of that memorable dialogue is not yet out of date, but is somehow never preached except in the popular dance drama of Malabar.

RAVANA VIJAIM

(VICTORY OF RAVANA IN LOVE-MAKING)

Beryl De Zoete describes a wonderful example of Ravana's love-making in which the Kathakaḷi actor shows him just as skilled in a delicate cajolement as the most romantic lover in her book "The Other Mind" : Thus

"I will now return to the play I mentioned above, in which occurs a remarkable scene of civilised love-making by Ravana. It really does not seem to have much to do with the action, considered as a developing plot, but forms dynamic contrast with which, in a musical composition, we should be perfectly satisfied. It consists of four scenes, each between two characters : the god Indra and Narada the musician and sage, inventor of the vina, with which he is seen on this occasion; Ravana and Mandodari his wife; Ravana and Narada; and Ravana and Bali, a famous monkey, though in a lower category than Hanuman.

In Scene I, which is introductory to the main action, we see Indra, in the make-up and dress of the rajasic or passionate hero, sitting on his throne (i.e., his stool) in dejected mood because he has been defeated by Ravana's son Indrajit, "Conqueror of Indra", whose name records this victory. Narada, got up as an old ascetic, with a wide, grey hemp beard, lowish hat bound round with tassels, naked torso and yellow waist-cloth, persuades Indra, with a good deal of sly, cunning and amusing motions, to agree to his getting Ravana to fight Bali who will certainly be able to avenge Indra, as he is the only creature capable of defeating Ravana. This is no easy matter and certainly not a short one, as the scene of the tweaking of Bali's tail, which is supposed to begin the fight, has to be mimed in anticipation by Narada; in fact the action moved freely, as usual in Kathakaḷi, between the past, present and future. Indra's resolution needs a great deal of screwing up, and many scenes are evoked by the dancer's gesture and the musician's song and drumming. At last Indra is worked up into a mood of acquiescence and the scene ends with a delightful dance of great virtuosity by the god in front of the ascetic.

Scene II opens with a splendid entry of Ravana above the curtain, under a red canopy, his green face enclosed in a manifold frame of white rice-flour beard, a huge blob on his nose, a maze of curving lines on his cheeks and scarlet intersecting his forehead above black eyebrows which hang like penthouse roofs over his blazing eyes. He is evidently in great inner perturbation which the drums thunderously echo for about five minutes with continuously changing rhythms. Then the curtain drops and we see Ravana's wife Mandodari lying asleep with her head in Ravana's lap. She is got up like a harem beauty. Here also the drumming is tremendous; the scene is immensely long but beautifully mimed by Ravana, who describes at length by gesture the appearance of Mandodari and praises her beauty. Her waking takes a long time, and is not very satisfactory when it happens, for she has dreamed an infidelity of Ravana and continually repels his very tender efforts to appease her. He watches her intently, trying to discover the reason for her anger. While she sits and glowers apart, he beats his breast and makes every gesture of love, describing her body, limb by limb, his lips parting occasionally in a smile which shows his gleaming teeth. The slow motion of this scene is very lovely; all

Ravana's gestures are very deliberate and seem to be illuminated by the long silver nails which flash on his brown fingers as they form image after image. The scene is very long, and might be dull if less well danced; but the spacing and disposition of Ravana's steps and gestures, and the passion behind his slow, deliberate miming prevent one from being bored. There was one extraordinary passage where drumbeats fell as lightly and as fast as the flowers which he describes himself as scattering. Then the shower of petals changes to thunder or hailstorm; Ravana is getting slightly cross. Without the drums, without his gestures, it is of no use to describe this scene further. Without any apparent transition Ravana springs from his crouching posture beside her and pulls her to her feet. The sulks are over and they are immediately reconciled in a delightful, ingratiating dance in which gestures are just for beauty and have no other meaning. Almost the whole of this scene was done on the ground, more or less invisible to the audience at the back, but they can listen to the drums and the words of the songs and though they have seen it so often, there is no alternative entertainment. But one is reminded again that the audience is really not essential to a performance; something important has taken place by the mere enactment of the story.

The terrific bout of drumming and quickening of the tempo which introduces Scene III prepares us for a change of mood; Ravana's lyrical mood is over, and his demoniacal make-up and the huge impedimenta of his dress, which did not, however, seem to interfere with his tender endearments, is now definitely appropriate. In the two following scenes he is completely at home, yelling defiance and flourishing the silver sword which he had received from Siva as a reward for his feat of shaking Kailasa. This scene he now re-enacts to the thunder of tumultuous drumbeats. The dance grows wilder and wilder, and Narada, who is tempting him to ruin, winds in and out like a subtle and exultant serpent and puckishly eggs him on if there is any sign of weakening in his aggressive mood.

But to continue with the baiting of Ravana by Narada. The cymbals were enough to kill any momentary reverie; I confess that at this point their relentless beat reminded me of the muffin man, and let loose a flood of quite inappropriate images.

We are at Scene IV, and above the curtain appears the vast halo of Bali, a terrific figure with black face, fantastic mosaic of features, and scarlet beard surrounding his red chin. His sleeves are of red fur and he is prolifically hung with stoles and tassels. The cymbals continue unabated while Bali winds himself up in the curtain. There is no trace in him of Hanuman's rarity, nor does he wear Hanunan's circular sombrero but, instead, an exaggerated version of Ravana's head-dress with a still huger halo of red, white, gold and green. Then all this alarming noise and curtain-shaking passes; it was only a sort of fanfare "presenting Bali", not as we are to see him in this scene, but in more typical version of his character. When the curtain is drawn aside again Bali is motionless on the ground in meditation, with Ravana beside him, perched on the stool, and Narada ready to egg him on. Even Ravana is slightly intimidated by the fearful majesty of Bali doing penance. He begins roaring to live up to his part but hesitates to touch the strands of rope which represent Bali's tail. When he at last does pluck up courage, loudly supported by the drums, he gets imprisoned in the tail and falls over, while Narada, delighted with the success of his plan, swaggers about playing an imaginary via. Bali does not move; only his fiery eye looks at Ravana, and the look is very impressive. Ravana is downcast; the more he struggles the more he becomes entangled and the more he is taunted by the unpleasant Narada. Finally Bali gets up and drags Ravana along in his tail but soon magnanimously releases him and even refuses to receive his homage. The fact is that Ravana's defeat by Bali and the twelve years' imprisonment which were his punishment—twelve years which were perhaps but a moment in Bali's meditation, the kind of moment which is measured in Hindu musical duration by the wink of an eyelid or cutting through a pile of lotus petals with a sword—had passed for us in the thunder of the drums, and the play was over. Bali's inaction was a more potent but on another plane I imagine that the tremendous drumming which accompanied this drama had something to do with the presence of Ravana.

This performance, unlike some I have seen, did not depend on dancers from outside, as it was entirely performed by pupils and teachers of Vallothol's school of Kathakaḷi. Sometimes, however, the expected dancer, invited for a special part in which he is famous, does not turn up at all and the subject of the play may have to be changed. I remember an occasion on which I had gone with the poet Vallothol and Mukunda Raja a considerable distance by train with some of his dancers to take part in a wedding performance. The whole afternoon the dancers sat about expecting the dancer without whom that particular play could not be done. When he did arrive at the last moment spirits rose considerably and the maquillage could proceed; he was a magnificent creature, even without it, and certainly worth waiting for."

APPENDIX III

"NALA-CARITA"

(THE LOVE OF NALA AND DAMAYANTI)

One of the finest literary pieces of the Kathakaḷi in Malayalam which throws considerable light on the rich dramatic literature of Kathakaḷi is the 3-night play "NALA-CARITA" written by Unnayi Varier, Kéraḷa's gifted poet and dramatist. To give an example of its rhythmic excellence, the play is produced in brief below :

In Hindu mythology, one of the greatest love stories is of Nala and Damayanti, in which the King falls in love with the daughter of Bhima, King of Vidarbha, by merely hearing of her incomparable charms and accomplishments. He does not know her heart but he broods over her and thinks of his life if he could conquer her. Passions were ablazed. His interest in the State work receded. One day when he was drowned in the fantasy of love in a lonely corner of his garden he perchance saw a golden swan sleeping on the bank of the lotus pond. The love-tormented King desired to possess it. He stealthily approached and caught it. The bird rudely awakened to find itself in captivity pleads of the King thus :

RAGA-KANTARA, TALA ATANTHA

Pallavi (*Burden*)

1. Siva Siva : entu ceyvu nan enne	*Swan*—Siva, Siva (O God) what am I to do, I am
2. caticcu kollunnitu rajendran	deceived and being killed by the king.

Anu-pallavi

3. Vivasam niravalambam mama kutumabvumini	Without support my family (hereafter).

4.	Janakan mariccu poyi, tanyan nanoruttanayi	(My) father dead, I his only son left behind.
5.	janani tante dasayinnine	(My) mother's plight thus.
6.	apica ma ma dayita kaliya	Then, my wife in truth
7.	llanaticirasuta pranan	Not long since confined
8.	kalayumatividhura ennal	She will kill herself grief-stricken; if so,
9.	kulamitakhilavum aruti vannitu	My line will be extinct for ever.
10.	cerutum pizha ceyyatorennekkonnal bahu	I who haven't done the smallest wrong. If thou kill,
11.	duritamundu tava bhupate.	Great sin will befall you, Oh ! king.
12.	manasi ruci jenakam ente	Mind-captivating (indeed) my Golden wings, with these.
13.	ciraku manikanakam ituko	
14.	Nadaka ni dhanikan ayyo	You will never become rich.
15.	gunavumanavadhi dosamayitu.	Alas ! this excellence is all a great fault (curse).

Saveri-atantha

16.	Arika hamsame arutu paridevitam	*Nala*—Know you swan, no need for lament,
17.	virasabhavamilla ninnil me	Unfriendly intentions none have I towards you.
18.	dehamanupamitam kanman	Body incomparable (so lovely) to see
19.	mohabharamuditam, ninkal	Desire great arose. To you
20.	snehamevihitam. na maya	Love only have I. From me
21.	drohamitupozhut amrakhagavara guna nidhe.	No harm now will befall, great and celestial bird, abode of virtues !
22.	khedamarute, paranniсchaykotta vazhi gacchani.	Grieve not, fly away where thou wilt.

Kamodari-cempata Pallavi

23.	Urjitasaya parthiva tava nan	*Swan*—Magnanimous one, ruler of the world ! To you I
24.	Upakaram kuryam.	Shall do a service.

Anupallavi

25.	ortu kandolam uttamanam ni	To my mind noblest one art thou.
26.	upama nahi, tava mannulakilum	There is none comparable to you in all the three worlds.
27.	bhutalamkhilam bhrulatika pari-	All the worlds, by your eye-brow twitch,
28.	pati nripadhipa ! te	Oh king, you control.
29.	nutana susumam vapurakhileksana-	Your fresh lovely form to all eyes
30.	kautukamatanute	Delight yields.
31.	adaraniyamasesamho tava	Everything in you indeed is admirable (worthy of respect)
32.	bhutadayavasate	Seat of Compassion;
33.	cutasarabha, gunairucita dayi-	Radiant as God of Love, One with excellences
34.	ta tava jatu na milita sulalita.	Befitting you there is. She, that lovely one ununited remains.
35.	darpita ripunrpakalpakrsanuvi-	To the proud hosts of enemy kings
36.	darbhamahiramanan	A consuming fire is he, the king of Vidarbha.
37.	kelpulla Bhinmanu colpperumoru maka-	To this mighty Bhima, a reputed daughter there is.
38.	lapratima bhuvane	Without a peer is she, in all the worlds.
39.	tval priyayakil analpa gunatvam	Thy beloved if she becomes,

40. nisphalamallayi te	Great excellences thine, will not fruitless be.
41. tal ghatanaya pragalbhata ma mate	To unite her to thee I have skill enough.
42. yam taravenamatinnaya-numati	Pray, permit me, to do that.
43. kamini rupini silavatimani	Desire-generating, of beauteous form, crest jewel of the virtuous,
44. hemamodasama.	Delighting as gold, is she the
45. Bhimanarendrasuta	Daughter of king Bhima,
46. Damayanti namarama navama	Damayanti is her name. A new born Rama (Lakshmi) indeed !
47. samaradhama vadhuma dabhumavi-	Humbled is the pride of celestial ladies
48. ramada komalima	By her excelling graces.
49. tvamnuraginiyam atini-kkubharam	Mine the duty to lead her heart to thee.
50. amradhipatim apahaya-raginam.	From Indra's love even will I wean her (for thee).

Toti-campata (*Pallavi*)

51. Priyamanasa, ni poy varenam	*Nala*—Dear one, go and come back (quick)
52. priyayotente varttakal colvan	To tell my beloved of me (of my state).
53. Priyamennorttu parakayo mama ?	Do you say all this because it is pleasing to me ?
54. kriyakondevamirunnitumo ni ?	By deeds wilt thou be like that ?
55. palarum collikettu nalina-mukhitan katha	Hearing many speak of the lotus-faced one,
56. balavadangajarti peruttitu hrdi me.	Mighty passion in my heart grew.

57. Oruvan sahayamillennurutaravedanaya	Helpless and in utter misery I remained,
58. maruvunneram ninte paricayam vannu daival.	When by God's grace I chanced to make your acquaintance.
59. akhilavum kettu dhariccazhakotu colluvanum	To hear and grasp everything told and to say it winsomely,
60. sukhamayanuminum natannettuvanum	To go and come back with speed and ease,
61. nakhalu sandeham vidhimikaverum ninne mama	You have skill enough. Providence gave thee to me.
62. sakhiyayittalla nidhiyayittatonnu	Not merely as a friend but as a veritable treasure.
63. vacanakausalena kaminimarmaniye	By the skill of your words, O ! friend, for me.
64. vasagayakki mama tarika sakhe ni	Win her, who is the crest-jewel of lovely maids.
65. itinu pratikriya vidhitanne tava ceyyum,	Recompense for this Providence will (give);
66. catiyalla niyallatorugatiyillinikkarum.	In truth, I have none but thee to help.

What is happening on the other side ? Damayanti has as well fallen in deep love with Nala on repeated hearing of his great virtues. The golden swan takes to its wings as a good friend and is to descend in her garden where she is in the company of her confidentees to whom she says :

The humming of the bees and the song of the kokils.
To my ears intensely painful.
The perfume of flowers smarts my nostrils.
Great pain-causing this garden visit.

On seeing it the golden swan descends in her garden. She asks her confidentees :

Is it lightning that comes descending ?
Is the moon coming down to earth ?

Is this an ambrosial stream for the eyes (meaning a sweet delight to the eyes)?
How delightful to look at this. Ere this
I have never seen nor heard of the like.
Gold-coloured swan, sweet voiced too.
Methinks, I can surely befriend it.
Oh, I just touched it with my hands. Friends
If I can secure it how delightful to sport with.
He is no wild one but gentle this lovely one.
Go you all far away, let none be near me.

The golden swan alights and Damayanti chases it sportingly but is drawn far away from her confidentees in her expectation to secure the bird. When Damayanti is decoyed to a safe distance, the dialogue between it and her begins :

Swan

Oh Jewel amongst beauties, tender one, what may your desire be ?
How can you catch me, who roams the high skies ?
Even with the advent of youthfulness your childish ways are not on the wane.
Indiscretion this, if seen, you will be laughed at.
Some will blame thee and you will miss your way.
No need to capture me, I am thy friend.
Trust me more than your confidantees.
One who is the envy of Indra and the God of Love
Will become thy beloved.
In the city of Nala I dwell. At the behest of the Lotus-born (Brahma)
I teach the lotus-eyed damsels their gait.
Tender and graceful, reflecting pride of youth.
Believe me, this is no jest.

Damayanti

I have seen you at close quarters and heard too your pretty jesting prattle.

Vehicle of the Lotus-born, Golden one, charming are your words.
Art thou the emissary of the Lotus-born ?
Is Nala's city your sweet home ?
O, thou of sweet form, ocean of excellences,
Emperor of birds, I bow to thee.
Vehicle of the Lotus-born, do tell of the great qualities of Nala.
Your words will end my misery,
Make my ears blessed.
All my thoughts I will confide in thee
If thou art friend, noble and kind-hearted one.
To me helpless and miserable, you are adorable.

The clever bird messenger knowing half her mind makes another strategic move to know it in full.

Swan

Be pleased to tell me your thoughts, daughter of king Bhima.
Shedding all your doubts and fears, regard me as one of your confidantes.
Lighten the burden of bashfulness, have no anxiety.
First amongst the lovely-eyed ones, sister of Dama, tender one,
Tell me, who among men claims your heart.
Most blessed indeed is he.
Gazelle-eyed one, tarry not to tell,
Nor seek to hide it in bashfulness.
I am here to aid you, fair one.
I won't betray nor cause disgrace.
Your secret desire will soon be fulfilled.
What I say now is all true.

Damayanti

Oh Swan king, to you what shall I tell ?
Gentle maidens' secrets hidden in their hearts, can they be ever told ?

Hearing people singing much of Nala's glories,
Enraptured, I dwelt on his beauteous form.
Riven by love's cruel darts I am burning,
I have grown (by this consuming passion) utterly miserable.

Swan

Since you have spoken the truth, without doubt,
Tender-limbed one, you will attain your heart's desire.
Good must unite with the good.
To be your lord none is the equal of Nala.
He is mightier than Indra.
His form enchanting, he is the abode of excellences,
Fair one, yours is the union of diamond with gold.
As Visnu to Lakshmi, Moon to Night, Siva to Uma.
So is Nala to you (meaning thereby so ideal a union).

APPENDIX IV

SOME KATHAKALI ACTORS OF NOTE

Brief biographical sketches of some famous Kathakaḷi actors are given below. The list is by no means exhaustive. If more biographical sketches, together with photographs, are sent by readers to the author, they shall be favourably considered for inclusion in the next edition of the book.

GURU SHANKARAN NAMBOODRI

The Guru belonged to Travancore. He was born in Ambalapuzha, a place famous for its temple, in a family of landlords and the most orthodox of Brahmins. His home is at Thakazhi and about a mile from Ambalapuzha in front of the temple of 'Shashtha'.

After his sacred-thread ceremony and the completion of his studies of the Vedas and the religious scriptures, he began to take keen interest in dance and drama and specially Kathakaḷi, the dance-drama of Malabar. His father, a great Pandit, looked with keen disapproval at this tendency on the part of his eldest son. This opposition was not surprising considering that Guru would be the first Brahmin to take to Kathakaḷi. But he started studying surrepticiously, nevertheless. Two years later a famous Kathakaḷi actor persuaded his father to attend a Kathakaḷi rehearsal. During the course of the rehearsal Guru appeared to the great amazement and ire of his father. But at the end of the performance, being himself a connoisseur of art, he could not help admiring the talent of his son in spite of his resentment. The battle was half won and in course of time he consented to allow his son to study "Natya" properly. Thenceforward young Guru had all the facilities and for four years he studied Abhinaya under a famous Chakkiyyar and then toured from one centre to another learning from different teachers whatever special they had to give. Thus for about fifteen years he worked hard and at the end of this period he toured all over Malabar with the best of Kathakaḷi troupes. From kings, chieftains and temples he received special recognitions in the shape of "Vira-Shrinkhalas", gifts and medals. He had also studied other forms of dances and Sanskrit dramas with all available literature on the subject which helped him to become easily the best exponent of his art.

The Guru was not only a great Kathakaḷi actor, he was a delightful person who combined in himself the unique qualities of the head and heart. Coming from the most orthodox family of Namboodri Brahmins of Travancore, he was well read in the Vedas and Shastras, in classical drama and the realities of life. He saw art in life and life in art, and being an extremely religious and pious man, he saw his God in Art and in his artistic work the fittest medium for reaching the Divine. This was a conviction which his every act in life showed.

In 1934 Uday Shankar saw him at Trivandrum on the stage and then in the house of the then Director of Archaeology. From the very first they took a great liking to each other which time only served to maintain, deepen and intensify. The same year the Guru came over to Calcutta to teach Shankar and the members of his company. In 1936 Guru with a party of other Kathakaḷi actors and musicians toured over Northern India including Calcutta, Patna, Allahabad, Lahore, Delhi, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Baroda and Bombay. In 1938, at the very inception of the Uday Shankar India Culture Centre, Guru came over to Almora and consecrated the image of Nataraja. Ever since the beginning he has been with the Centre teaching Kathakaḷi and expressions to the students and Group Members for eight months of the school term and having vacation during winter at home in Malabar.

Art and worship were his two great concerns in life, and they were for him one and the same thing. His love for Shankar was so strong and genuine that when people in Malabar tried to dissuade him from going so far away from home, he would say, "If Shankar calls me even in the middle of the sea, I will unhesitatingly go to him." He kept his promise and till the very hour of his death, at 7·30 p.m., August 7, 1943, at an age of 63, he was active, working and happy. He left behind two sons, daughters, a widow and a large family of relatives, admirers and pupils who will ever bemoan this terrific loss to the art-world of Kathakaḷi.

The death that overtook the great master was as sudden as glorious. Five minutes before he had acted the scene of "Dussasana Vadham". This scene was performed with the vigour and strength of youth, when the actor reached the very acme of perfection in the portrayal of the 'Raudra' aspect. The work done, Guru went and sat in the auditorium and watched an item by the girl students. Just before "Indra" was to begin he relaxed in his seat and lolled over. He was taken in the fresh air when Dada, dressed up as Indra, ready to begin his dance, rushed out and caught hold of his Guru in his arms. Guru breathed his last, with a quiet, contented smile on his lips, body still moist with perspiration from his dance, surrounded by his pupils. It was unbelievable, monstrous. Yet it was glorious, magnificent. He loved to dance and teach. He danced as he lived and he died dancing, at his best, every inch an artiste, dignified, straight and active even at 63. While he taught and danced an aura of glory and an atmosphere of serene peacefulness was always shed through his glowing eyes and smiling lips. As he danced his way to his Creator, to Nataraj, whose ardent devotee he was, he still smiled with joy. His death is a shock, a great calamity for the Centre and the world of art, but what could be more glorious and desirable for a true artiste.

Uday Shankar regarded Guru as the symbol of the Centre, and after his death he said, "I cannot believe it, he looks so peaceful and happy. He has not only been a Guru and a father to me but much more. I feel bewildered but I know he is not gone. Fathers and Gurus never 'die', they are immortal. I have not been able in this life to get even a fraction of his art but I pray that when I die I might at least follow him and depart suddenly, working and enjoying my work till the very last minute."

KUNCHU KURUP

Born at Ambalapuzha, Travancore-Cochin State in 1881, Guru Kunchu Kurup started his training at the age of 12 under the renowned teacher, Champakkulam Sanku Pillai.

He is known for his versatile genius and as a performer of varied roles in which he shows a great mastery over the technique and literature of Kathakaḷi dancing. His main *forte* is *abhinaya*. Today he is the finest exponent of Kathakaḷi *abhinaya* in the country. The Guru is an able teacher too. He has reared up a number of outstanding dancers. [Guru Gopinath is a relation and disciple of his. Others of his competent disciples are Krishnan, Madhavan and Haridas (his son).] He has done a pioneering work in the revival of Kathakaḷi and is a founder-member of Kéraḷa Kala Mandalam. He was first brought into prominence by Ragini Devi, an American danseuse, now naturalized in India.

Guru Kunch Kurup was awarded the *Vir-Srinkhala* by his Highness the Maharaja of Cochin in 1930 and was subsequently honoured by the Prince of Berar and His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore. In 1956, he was the recipient of the country's highest honour in Kathakaḷi—the Sangeet Natak Akadami Award.

K. CHATHUNNI PANICKER

In K. Chathunni Panicker, India has one of the greatest Kathakaḷi actors in the country. He is an intelligent actor, with a fund of imagination and innate feeling for gestural interpretation. Gifted with large hands, plastic movement of the body and an expressive face, the artiste is capable of turning any artistic job in the most fascinating manner. In this, he is a creative genius.

Most of Panicker's time is spent in Ahmedabad where he trains pupils in Shrimati Mrinalini Sarabhai's dance institution, Darpana. He composes ballets and sets cheeography for Mrinalini's ballets.

C. N. ADYAL

Of young Kathakaḷi actors, C. N. Adyal, who is a member of Kéraḷa Kala Mandalam, is a promising actor of note. He combines in him the agility of a dancer and histrionics of a dramatist. He has an uncanny sense of rhythm and control of the dancing fingers. He outshines himself in kingly demoniac roles.

RAMAN KUTTY NAIR

Raman Kutty Nair is the chief instructor at Kéraḷa Kala Mandalam and is an artiste of remarkable histrionic talent. He is considered to be the greatest living Thullal artiste of Kéraḷa as well.

APPENDIX V

CONTRIBUTION OF THE ROYAL FAMILIES OF TRAVANCORE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSIC AND DANCING

The development of music and dancing in Malabar owes its gratitude to the royal families of Travancore. Since the inception of Kathakaḷi to this day, it is developed under the patronage of His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore, who is the patron of various troupes of Kathakaḷi actors. His Highness Maharaja Shree Chitra Thiruval maintained a royal troupe of skilled Kathakaḷi performers for occasional shows during *utsavams* (festivals) and other auspicious moments. His Highness is also a great critic who once referred to Kathakaḷi as an art-form which has given one new art-form to the world. The following is a chronological table of the development of this art in Kéraḷa:

1575–1650 A.D.—Virakerala Varma, the Raja of Kottarakkara—the founder of the Kathakali.
1758–1798 A.D.—H. H. Karthika Thirunal Maharaja—the great composer of songs in Kathakaḷi. His nephew, Prince Asvathi Thirunal was in some respects the most powerful composer.
1813–1847 A.D.—H. H. Svathi Thirunal Rama Varma Maharaja—the great musician and composer. (The Augustan Age in Travancore.)
1847–1860 A.D.—H. H. Uthram Thirunal Marthanda Varma Maharaja.
1860–1880 A.D.—H. H. Ayilyam Thirunal Rama Varma Maharaja.
To-day—Development under the patronage of H. H. Sri Chitaral Thirunal Bala Rama Varma Maharaja, and the Queen-Mother, Her Highness Maharani Sethu Parvati Bai.

APPENDIX VI

"KATHAKALI"

(*Transliteration of a Sanskrit Manuscript in Malayalam, "Kathakaḷi", into Devnagari script*)

कथाकली ताम्रपत्र से उद्धृत

हस्तं पताको मुद्राख्यः कटको मुष्टि - रित्यपि
कर्तरी मुख संयुक्तः शुकतुण्डः कपित्थकः
हंसपक्षश्च शिखरी हंसास्यः पुनरंजलिः
अर्द्धचन्द्रश्च मुकुरो भ्रमरः सूचिकामुखः
पल्लवस्त्रिपताकश्चः मृगशीर्षाह्वयस्तथा
पुनः सर्पशिरः समयो मर्धमान कल्यतपी
अरालः ऊर्णनाभश्च मुकुलः कटकामुखः
चतुर्विंशतिरित्येते कराः शास्त्रज्ञसम्मताः

सूर्यो च गजस्य मुखः ऋषभो ग्राहतोरणै,
लता पताका बीचिश्च रथ्यापातालभूमयः
जघनम् भाजनम् हर्म्यम् सायम् माध्यम् निहम घनम्

वल्मीकः ऊरू दासश्च चरणम् चक्रमासनम्
असतिगोपुरम् चैत्यम् शकटम् सौम्यकुब्जकौ
कपाटम् उपधानम् च परिखाग्री तलागले
षट्त्रिंशत् भरतेनोक्ता पताकासंयुताः कराः

दिक्सो गमनम् जिह्वा ललाटम् गात्रमेवच
इव शब्दश्च शब्दश्च दूतः सैकत पल्लवाः
असंयुक्तः पताकाख्यः दशहस्ताः समीरिताः

अंगुष्ठस्तु तर्जन्याद्यग्रे मिलितो भवेत्
श्लैशावः श्लघिता यस्य मुद्राख्य सकरो मतः
वर्धनम् चलनम् स्वर्गम् समुद्रम् सांद्रविस्मृतिः

सर्वो विज्ञापनम् वस्तु मृत्युश्चे ध्यानमेवच
रूपवत्तम ऋजुप्रोक्तो मुद्राख्यस्तु त्रयोदश

चित्तम् चिंताभिलाषश्च स्वयम् चैव तथास्मृतिः
पुनः ज्ञानंच सृष्टिश्च पश्चात् प्राणपराभवौ
भाव्यर्थश्च नञर्थश्च चतुर्थी द्वादशोदिताः
असंयुक्ता मुनीन्द्रैस्तुकराः मुद्राह्वया स्मृताः

अंगुष्टांगुली भूलन्तु संस्पृशे द्यदि मध्यमाः
मुद्राभिधान हस्तस्तु कटकाख्या व्रजेत्तदाः

विष्णु कृष्णौ हली बाण स्वर्णम् रूप्यम् निशाचरी
निद्रा प्रधानयोषा श्री वीणा तारास्म गुलपल्लम्
रक्षः किरीटम् परिध्वम् विशेष स्यन्दनम् पुनः
सहात्यी विंशति कराः संयुक्त कटका ह्वयाः

कुसुमम् टर्पणम् नारी होम्य स्वेदाल्प वाचकम्
यच्च तूणीरः सुरभि निर्द्दिष्टा कटकाभिधाः
असंयुक्ता नव कराः नाट्यशास्त्रविशारदैः
अंगुषुस्तर्जनी पार्श्वं आश्रीतोंगुलयः पराः
आकुंचिताश्च यस्यस्युः सहस्तो मुष्टि संज्ञकाः

सूतोपसर्गो लावण्यम् पण्यम् भूतश्च बंधनम्
योग्यम् स्थितिश्च गुल्फश्च कर्षणम् चारमेयमः
पंकमौषधिशायम् च डाला द्रानम् प्रदक्षिणम्
खननम् त्याग कुन्तौचः विक्रम स्तपनौ स्तथाः
उद्गीणम् प्रसवश्चैवः हस्ता स्ने पंच चिंशंति
मुष्टि संज्ञामुनीद्रैस्तु संयुक्ता परिकीर्तिताः

वृथार्त्थश्च मृशार्त्थश्च धिगर्त्थसच्चिवस्तथा
लंघनम् सहनम् दानम् अनुवादो जयंम् घनुः
अस्मच्छब्दै क वाक्यम् तुजरा हरण भोजने
अयुक्त मुष्टिनामान कराः पंच दशोदिताः
कनीय स्युन्नतायत्र त्रिस्त्रः स्युः सन्नतापराः
अंगुषुस्तर्जनी पार्श्वम् संस्पृशेत् भरतर्षभः
कर्तरीमुखमित्याहुः हस्तनांतृत्त वैदिभीः

पापश्तमो ब्राह्मणश्च कीर्तिः कु भोगृहम् व्रतम्
शुद्धि स्तीरश्च वंशश्च क्षुधा श्रवण भाषणम्
गणावसानम् मृगया नाट्यज्ञै मुनि पुंगवैः
कर्तरीमुख हस्तास्तु संयुक्ता षोडशस्मृताः
युष्मदर्त्थक वचनम्, वचनम् सभयम् क्रमः
वहूक्ति रस्मच्छव्दस्य मर्त्या वक्त्रम् विरोधिताः
वालको नकुलश्चापि नृतज्ञै स्समुदीरिताः
कर्तरीमुख हस्ताख्य असंयुक्ता दशैवही
भ्रूलते वयदा वकत्र तर्जन्यंगुषु संयुताः
नमितानाभिकाशेषे कुंचितोदंचितेतदा
शुकतुंडक मित्याहराचार्य भरतर्षभ
हस्तोयमंकुशे चैव पक्षिण्येव प्रचूज्यतेः

नमीतानाभिका पृष्टमंगुष्टो यदि संस्पृशेत्
कनिष्टिका सुनम्राच यस्मिस्तुसकरस्मृतः
कपित्थाश्चम् च विद्वदिम्मर्नृत्त शास्त्र विशारदैः
वागुरा संशयः पिञ्जना पान स्पर्शो निवर्तन
बहिपृष्टावतरणे पदविन्यास एवत्यपि
संयुक्तोस्तु कपित्थाख्य दश हस्ता समीरिताः

अंगुल्यात्तुयथापूर्वम् संस्थितायदि यस्य तु
सहस्तो हंसपक्षाख्योंगण्यते भरतादि भीः
चन्द्रो मन्मथ वायुश्च देव पर्वत सान वा
नित्य बन्धव शय्याश्च शिला सुख मुरस्तनम्
वसनम् वाहनम् व्याज श्शयनम् पतनम् जनम्
ताडना ज्ञादनम् चैवः व्यापनम् स्थापनम् तथा
आलिंगनम्चानु यानम् पालनम् प्राणनम् गदा
कपोलमंस केशश्च विधेयानुग्रहौ मुनिः
इतिशब्दाभिधेयश्च मत्स्य पूजन कज्ञप
हंस पक्षाख्य हस्तास्तु चत्वारिम् शब्द योन्तरम्
संयुक्ति नाट्य शास्त्रज्ञै कथिता मुनि पुंगवैः
युष्मद्बह्वक्ति खलगो रूल इदानी महमग्रत
परशु र्हति राह्वान मुत्संग प्राप्ति वारणै
अयुक्त हंस पक्ताख्य हस्त एकादशः स्मृतः
करशाखास्तु विश्लिष्टा मध्या हस्त तलस्यतु
किंचिता कुंचितम्चस्य लुठितासोञ्जली कराः

प्रवर्षम् वमनम् वह्नि प्रवाह प्रेंघन प्रभा
मूर्धजम् कुंडलम् चैव, सन्ताप संभ्राम स्सदा
नदी स्नानम् प्रवाहश्च रुधिरम् नाट्यकोविदः
संयुक्तां जली नामानो हस्ता पंच दशो दिताः
अयुक्ताण्नली नामाना उभावे वकरास्मृतौ
शंख क्रोडश्च विद्वद्भिः नाट्य शास्त्र विशारदैः
अंगुषुम् तर्जनीं चापि वर्जयित्वे तरक्रमाल्
ईषदा कुंचिता यत्र सो दर्घ चन्द्र कर स्मृतः
यद्यर्थश्च किमर्थश्च वैवश्चश्च नभस्थलम्
धन्यो देव स्मृतिम् चापितृणम पुरुष कुंतलम्
संयुक्तार्थ चन्द्राख्या हस्तान व समीरितः
प्रस्थानमुन्न हासश्च किंशब्दं भि कत्थनम्
असंयुक्तार्थ चन्द्राख्य चत्वारः संस्मृता कराः

मध्यमानामिका नम्रे अंगुष्ठोपिपरस्परम्
यद्याश्मेरन्स्यशीय मुकुरस्स करो मतः
दंष्ट्र वियोगो जंघा च नितंबो बेदु सोदरौ
स्तंभम् चोलूखलम् वेगी पिशाच पुष्टिरित्यपि
एकादश समादिष्टा संयुक्ता मुकुरा कराः
वियतो भ्रमरो रश्मी कोप सुष्टु च कंकणम्
ग्रीवा गदभ् निषेधोपित्य युक्त मुकुरानवः
नमिता तर्जनी यस्यस्सहस्त्रो भमरा ह्वयः
डारूल् शानम् जलम् छत्रम् दंतीकर्णो मनीषिभि
भ्रमराख्यस्तु संयुक्तमूहस्तम् पंच समीरितम्
गंधर्वा जन्म भीतिश्च रोदनम् नाट्यकोविदेः
भ्रमराख्यस्सुरव संयुक्तश्चत्वोरस्समुदीरितः
मध्यमानामिका पृष्टु भंगुष्टोयदि संस्पृशेत
कनिष्टिका कुंचिता च सूचीमुख करस्तुसः
भिन्नमुल्प तनम् लोको लक्ष्मणम्ः पातः मन्यज्ञः
मासो भ्रूशिथिलम् वालो सूचीमुखादशा
एक कष्टम् जडोन्यश्च बहूक्तिश्रूवंणम् कलाः
पुराणमेते राण्यश्च, किंचिल साक्षीनिरासनम्
आगश्चगश्च युद्धम् च सूचिमुख कर स्मृतः
षोडशै वहि नाट्यज्ञै रसम् युक्ता मनीषि भो
मूलम् चानामिकाम् गुल्यां अंगुषोयदि संस्पृशेज
यस्मींस्तुतृण शास्त्रे ज्ञैः पल्लवस्सकर स्मृता

वजाम् पर्वत श्रगम् च गोकर्णा नेत्र दीर्घिका
महिषः परिख प्रासो जन्तु शृगम् च वेष्टतम्
संयुक्त पल्लवाख्यास्तु करानव समीरिर्ताः
द्वरम् पर्णाच धूपम् च पुक्कम् वेत्रम् च शालय
अशुक्त पल्लवाख्योस्तु हस्त षट् समुदीजिता

अंगुषु कुंचिताकारस्तर्जनी मूल मात्रितः
यदि स्याल सकर प्रोक्ता त्रिपताका मुनीश्वरै
अस्तमादिरये पान शरीरम् याचनम् बुधैः
षडेते त्रिपताकाख्या संयुक्ता संस्मृता कराः

स्पर्शेत प्रदेश्नी यत्र रेखा मंगुषुमध्यगाम्
कुपितोदंचिता वेषास्सहस्तो वर्ध्यमानकः
मध्यमानामिका नम्र अंगुष्ठोऽपि परस्परम्
यंद्यार मेरन् स्पर्शाय मुकुरस्सकरो मतः
मूलम् चानामिकाम् गुल्लयाम् अंगुष्ठो यदि संस्पृशत्ः
यस्मी स्तु तृणशास्त्रज्ञैः पल्लवः सकरः स्मृतः

मध्यमा तर्जनी मध्यमंगुष्ठ प्रविशेद्यादि
शेषा सन्ममिता यत्र सहस्त कटका मुखः

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FOOT-NOTES INDEX

1. Anand K. Coomaraswamy, "Dance of Shiva", p. 66.
2. Edmond Selous in "Zoologist", December, 1901.
3. Havelock Ellis in "The Dance of Life", p. 34.
4. Ibid.
5. Quoted by Havelock Ellis.
6. Havelock Ellis in "The Dance of Life", pp. 37-38.
7. Mrs. Stan Harding in "Illustrated Weekly of India", August 20, 1939.
8. Mahakavi Ulloor Parameswara Aiyar in his treatise "The History of Kerala Literature", quotes two stanzas in support of his contention.
9. These can be seen in the Manuscript Library of Trivandrum.
10. Birbal was the humourist courtier of Akbar's Court.
11. In the 14th and 15th centuries A.D. the music of Travancore underwent a remarkable transformation by the introduction of the *Gīta Gövind* of Jayadéva, which, in many respects, transmuted the musical melodies extant in the country and gave them a profound grace and dignity combined with majesty. The charm of the *Gīta Gövind* lies in its sweet and mellifluous diction with abundant use of alliteration and complex rhymes, and in its expression of exuberant erotic emotions. Its songs have a strength, a depth and an assurance combined with a beauty, a pathos and a piety unexpressed before, and on that account they took a deep hold on the religious instincts of the people. The grace of sound and diction exquisitely employed in them set the standard of musical melody in the State and they are even now sung in the important temples of Travancore. The result was the happy introduction of the use of the *Padams*, or, musical compositions, couched in a mellifluous concord of sweet sound. The percursor of this type of composition in Travancore was Virkérala Varmā (whose songs are embodied in his *Rāmāyanam Kathakaḷi* plays) 17th century A.D., the Raja of Koṭṭarakkārā, who is supposed to be the founder of Kathakaḷi. . .The music of his compositions is the effect of combination of sounds as mere sensations.

   —*Music in Travancore*, R. V. Poduval, B.A., Director of Archaeology, Travancore.

12. It may be interesting to note here that roughly during this very period a ruler of Manipur in Assam was accorded a vision of Lord Kriśṇa, so the story goes, and was given a peacock feather. Manipuri dance commemorates this experience, and its dancers still put a feather in their head-dresses.
13. R.V. Poduval, B.A., in "The Art of Kathakaḷi", p. 16.

14. It may be of interest to note here that the celebrated and the greatest of all dramatists in Sanskrit of all time, Kālidāsa, also emerged out of an idiotic state as an immortal writer.

15. Kartika Thirunal was affectionately called the Dharma Raja. He consolidated the territories conquered by his uncle, Martanda Varma, the father of modern Travancore, and made the State impenetrateable by Tippu Sultan. He introduced many reforms of far-reaching import. He was a linguist and had mastery over four "foreign" languages, English and Persian, Hindustani and Tamil.

16. Besides a literateur, Vira-kerala Varma was also an able administrator, reformer, scholar and poet.

17. Venkateshwar, *The Kathakḷai of Malabar* (Triveni, 1932).

18. There is no restriction for entry in the "stadium". In this respect it resembles with the *Rasa Lila* performances of Brij (Mathura), *Halleesaka* of Gujerat, and *Jatra* of Bengal.

19. In a *Bharatnatyam* programme, *Alarippu* is the opening item. It gives a preamble to the whole bill. It is invocational in character. Its basic form is : the feet held together in *samapada*, body inclined forward, the arms stretched at the shoulders' height and parallel to the dance-floor, but broken at the elbow making a 135 degrees angle and the palms almost at perpendicular to the wrists. The danseuse jerks the arms forward and backwards from the shoulder-blades, lifts the right foot in an arching position and alternatively throwing backwards both the feet in a sitting but motionful movement. In a more traditional *Alarippu*, the arms are held high overhead, both hands clapped in *pataka*, i.e., in the common salutation form of *namaskar*.

20. *Vide* sloka

Netra bhroo mukha ragadei rupangai rupabrimhitah,
Pratyangaisch karah karya rasa-bhava pradarśakah.

21. *Vide* sloka

Yato haste statodṛśti ryato dṛśti stato manah
Yato mana stato bhava yato bhava stato rasah.
—Nandikeśwara in *Abhinaya Darpana*.

22. For origin of Mudras see Appendix.

23. Full text of *mudras* in *Kathakaḷi*, a Sanskrit manuscript is appended at the end of this book. The original is in Malayalam script.

24. "The Dance of India" by Faubion Bowers, p. 76.

25. "Classical Dances and Costumes of India" by Kay Ambrose, p. 61.

26. "The Dance of India ", by Faubion Bowers, p.76

27 & 28. See the chapter on "Mudras" (Single Hand Poses).

29. This is the *pralokita* look. Please see the chapter on "Symbolism and Gesture".

It is one of the principal glances—*Jugupsit*, literally, inquisitive.

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